Sermon- He Restores My Soul

Scripture: Ps 143:1-6 (NLT), Ps 23 (NKJV) Sunday, October 1, 2017

In our prayer series so far we have been talking about how to pray. We used Jesus’s teaching on the Lord’s prayer to go through a 3 part series on prayer. Before that I preached about the mountaintop experience you can have with God in the tent of meeting and I even preached a sermon on praying through a God silence, when God seems to from our perspective atleast be going through an eclipse. Then last Sunday Abraham preached about the persistence in prayer that comes from having faith, using the parable of the evil judge. If that woman in the parable is going to get her justice because she persisted in her pleadings before a judge who couldn’t care less, then then how much more should we persist, after all we have faith in our heavenly Father who is perfect judge.

Today, I would like to deal with a different angle to prayer. The issue is this. Just because you have read an instruction manual to a car, it does not make you a mechanic. A baby does not cry because it knows how to cry, right? A baby cries because it is hungry or uncomfortable. So what makes people pray with depth and passion? It is obviously not the knowledge they have on how to pray. People pray with passion because they have a hunger and thirst for God. In fact the trigger to deep prayer is a kind of desperation for God. That is what we are going to examine today. Where does that desperation for God come from? To answer that we are going to turn first to Ps 143. Now this Psalm is called a penitential Psalm. There are a total of 7 penitential Psalms and Ps 143 is the last of them. It is called penitential because in it King David is crying out to God with great sorrow for his own sins and a great desperation because he is literally being hunted down by his enemies. In this particular Psalm, David is actually being chased by an army which is half his own army lead by his own son Absalom. Now David loved his son deeply and so this situation is pretty much the worst case scenario in terms of life circumstances as you can see. If this was just any enemy he was being chased by it would hardly bother David. After all David was an expert warrior and brilliant general. David had courage, he had intelligence, he had a mind for battle strategy and he usually had God on his side. And with all these strengths he had fought hundreds of wars and won. As a result he had expanded the boundaries of the nation of Israel and presided over one of the most glorious periods in the history of Israel. Now imagine a warrior like David being hunted by an enemy that really made him tremble. Yes, there was one. It was his own army, lead by his own son, whom he loved. This is what happened. In spite of King David’s strengths he had been a terrible parent and had committed some terrible acts of adultery and murder. And even though David repented of his sins, the consequences of his sins followed him throughout his life. Absalom wanting to take over his father’s thrown by force was a result of many bad choices that David had made. By the way, I am not saying that every sinful act of a child can be traced back to flawed parenting. Sometimes in spite of the best parenting, children do their own thing and as adults everybody is responsible for their own sins. But in David’s case there were things he did as a parent that he never should have done. And now they were coming back to haunt him. So here David is, faced with an enemy he does not want to kill. In fact when he looks at Absalom he sees the consequences of his own flawed parenting and feels sorry for him. Yet, he is being hunted down by an army that knowns him better than anybody else. So what is David to do? He cannot rely on his military expertise, to win this war. And yet his own survival and that of his nation is at stake here. So David is brought to that point of utter desperation. And that is when he cries out to God with all the strength he has remaining.

Hear my prayer, O Lord;
    listen to my plea!
    Answer me because you are faithful and righteous.
**2**Don’t put your servant on trial,
    for no one is innocent before you.
**3**My enemy has chased me.
    He has knocked me to the ground
    and forces me to live in darkness like those in the grave.
**4**I am losing all hope;
    I am paralyzed with fear.
**5**I remember the days of old.
    I ponder all your great works
    and think about what you have done.
**6**I lift my hands to you in prayer.
    I thirst for you as parched land thirsts for rain.

Can you hear David’s desperation?

Now I want to tell you this. There are many people who might say, well David’s situation was unique. He was a king and he lived 3000 years ago. How has his life any connection with my own? Here’s how. People in different levels of society live differently and we may not be able to identify with those elements of their lifestyle that we have never experienced, like flying around in your own plane etc. But I tell you there is one thing that unifies all human beings from president to pauper. They are life’s troubles. And you and I may not have gone through the exact problem that David did, but you only need to be human to relate to his despair.

We are going to leave David’s despair for some time and move to a very different place altogether. To a place outside of this universe even and all the way back in time before creation. You see at that point before creation, the Triune God already existed as Father Son and Holy Spirit. And each member of the Trinity had an incredible level of fellowship with each other. Then God decided to invite others into this fellowship and so needed to create beings who would have the capacity to participate in and enjoy this incredible fellowship that existed within the Trinity. So, God decided to create human beings in his image. Beings who would be able to walk and talk with God, beings who could participate in his work. But because these human beings needed to have such a high capacity, part of that capacity was to opt out of a relationship with God. And when you have a range of beings who have this high capacity and have opted out, now you have a world that is very hostile to God. In fact the Bible says that Satan is the ruler of this world, even though after Christ he is a defeated being. So the result of all this opting out is that we live in a world system that pulls us against God’s wishes, we have the ruler of this world that is prowling around to set up customized attacks and we have our own bodies working against us. So you and I don’t have to be rulers of nations to be under attack from enemy forces. We just have to be plain old people quietly going about our God’s work in a tiny corner of His kingdom, to be messed around by Satan big time. There is this show on Netflix that I sometimes watch with Andrew called Once. It is a fascinating show but in this show there is this creature called a “wraith”. The wraith is general is a ghost like figure but in this show the wraith has a horrible power. When it sees a human being, it kills by literally sucks the soul out of the person. It sounds like a terrible show but it is actually not a horrow show at all but a modern day fairytale. Anyway, I am not trying to make a plug for the show here. But in case you are wondering, what a soul is anyway. The soul is the eternal essence of the person, a person’s identity, energy and purpose. And the Bible says clearly that the soul cannot be killed. It is like this. When you play chess, if you are say the white knight and the white knight is killed, it only means the piece comes off the board. But white knights have not been eliminated forever right. A human soul is like that. A soul cannot be killed or sucked out by wraithes. But I can tell you something, King David would testify to the fact that, your soul can be crushed here on earth. This world has the capacity to crush your soul. And it is not just a possibility, but part of life on the earth. This earthly life will crush your soul. And you have either already experienced what I am talking about or you will one day. This is what King David is talking about when we says, My enemy has chased me.
    He has knocked me to the ground
    and forces me to live in darkness like those in the grave.
**4**I am losing all hope;
    I am paralyzed with fear

This world will crush you relentlessly and mercilessly because the ruler of this world, Satan hates you. You know why, because one day, you will have an exalted place in heaven and he who was created an exalted being in heaven will be in the trashcan of the universe, the bottomless pit where he can stew in his eternal failure forever. But the bottom line is this. This world that you and I live in will crush your soul.

But if you think I am painting a gloomy picture, you are wrong friends. Because, I am just about to get to the exciting part. Here is the deal friends, when life gets to you and rolls over your soul like a road roller, like David in Ps 143, it is also at that moment that something amazing happens. It causes us to cry out to God with a depth and sincerity that we usually just don’t have for whatever reason. Hear David, cry out to God in the second half of Ps 143,

Answer me speedily, O Lord;
My spirit fails!
Do not hide Your face from me,
Lest I be like those who go down into the pit.
**8**Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For in You do I trust;
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You.

**9**Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies;
In You I take shelter.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+143&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-16303a)]
**10**Teach me to do Your will,
For You *are* my God;
Your Spirit *is* good.
Lead me in the land of uprightness.

**11**Revive me, O Lord, for Your name’s sake!
For Your righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble.
**12**In Your mercy cut off my enemies,
And destroy all those who afflict my soul;
For I *am* Your servant.

Did you hear something in David’s cry there? It is in that moment that God’s words to us actually reaches our soul. It is not that God was ignoring us all this time and he suddenly starts speaking to us. Not at all. He was always trying to call out to us. It is just that something about the nature of the world that we live in prevents us from paying attention to God’s words. You see Christ has been telling us all along, I died for you, I love you enough to die for your sins, to take your place on the cross, to forgive you and give you new birth and restore you. But something about this world, drowns that message out so we don’t hear it. Or even if we hear it, it makes no impact on our soul. Maybe you gave your live to Christ some time ago but over a period of time other things took a higher priority over Christ, and that first love became cold. Then like David one day, our soul is crushed and we feel the weight of our sin and we feel we have nowhere to turn and suddenly, from the depth our being we cry out to God. Suddenly God’s light becomes visible and we know that light is illuminating our own lives like we have never seen illuminated before. That is what Jesus Christ does for us. He restores our soul, not to what it was before we were crushed. He restores it to factory settings, when he first planned you, God’s masterpiece that you were created to be from the foundation of this world.

You see when God restores our soul it deepens our conversations with God. That is what is happening is Psalm 23. What you are looking at in Psalm 23 is the soul of a person who is restored back to wholeness in God. Scholars agree that this Psalm is dated to the later portion of David’s life. At this point David can truly see what God is doing in his life. God is providing for his needs, God is restoring his soul, God is leading him along the right path, God is removing all fear from his life when he walks through life’s valley’s. He is not even afraid of his enemies anymore. In fact he is confident that one day, he will feast and celebrate while his enemies look on, helpless, defeated and ashamed of themselves. David is at this point full of joy and full of the awareness of the goodness of God. In fact I can tell you David who was king and lives in palaces, means it with all sincerity when he says, living in God’s house for all eternity is what he wants more than anything in his whole life, because even one day in God’s house is better than a thousand elsewhere.

So what we see is this. In the life of King David, he did experience some really terrible circumstances in his life, but in the end of it all he turns to God, has his soul restored and then has the deepest most beautiful conversations with God.

Now here is the question I want to ask us as a church. If we want God to restore our soul, what would our cry to God look like? What would our prayers sound like? What would the level of despair be? What would the energy level be like? These are questions I want you to ponder deeply. And do you think God will talk back to us? Ofcourse he will! He is talking back all the time. But it is a sense of despair that causes us to open our spiritual eyes and ears to really see and hear what He has to say to us.

So as we continue on our prayer journey, it is my hope that no matter what happens, this year will be a year where our prayer life is deepened like never before. I pray that our conversations with God take on a new depth, that our perception of God’s voice be enhanced and our excitement of being in a relationship with God be ignited for the very first time or be restored in a way that sends beams of light all over the place. Let us pray.