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**Our Refuge**

**Psalm 57**

**Series: Special Services – Post-Hurricane Milton**

**October 13, 2024**

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- I. We are here to sing!
  - A. Only believers truly sing
    - 1. The world cannot sing
      - a. And has nothing to sing about
  
- II. The songs of the people of God often flow out of trial, disappointment, and trouble
  - A. The modern equivalent is the Spiritual
    - 1. Which flowed out from the oppression of the African-American experience in slavery
  - B. Nobody knows the trouble I've had,
    - 1. Nobody knows but Jesus.
    - 2. Nobody knows the trouble I've had,
    - 3. Glory Hallelujah!
  - C. Where does the Glory Hallelujah come from?
    - 1. It comes from the confidence that God will ultimately lead us out of the trials
  - D. Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
    - 1. Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
    - 2. Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
      - a. A long way from home,
      - b. A long way from home.
      - c. (True believer.)
      - d. A long way from home,
      - e. A long way from home.
    - 3. Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
      - a. Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
      - b. Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
      - c. (True believer.)
      - d. Way up in the heav'nly land,
      - e. Way up in the heav'nly land.
  - E. Where does the Way up in the heav'nly land come from?
    - 1. It comes from the True believer
      - a. Out of the deep reservoirs of faith
  
- III. Psalm 57 – an Ancient Hebrew Spiritual
  - A. A lament that turns into triumph through confidence in God

- B. Psalm 57 (ESV) —
1. TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO DO NOT DESTROY.
    - a. Meant to be sung
    - b. Has it's own hymn tune
  2. A MIKTAM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM SAUL, IN THE CAVE.
    - a. Flowing from his trial in the wilderness
  3. 1 Be merciful to me, O God,
    - a. be merciful to me,
    - b. for in you my soul takes refuge;
    - c. in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
    - d. till the storms of destruction pass by.
  4. [Did he just say storms?]
  5. 2 I cry out to God Most High,
    - a. to God who fulfills his purpose for me.
  6. 3 He will send from heaven and save me;
    - a. he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah
    - b. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!
  7. 4 My soul is in the midst of lions;
    - a. I lie down amid fiery beasts—
    - b. the children of man,
    - c. whose teeth are spears and arrows,
    - d. whose tongues are sharp swords.
  8. 5 Be exalted, O God,
    - a. above the heavens!
    - b. Let your glory be over all the earth!
  9. 6 They set a net for my steps;
    - a. my soul was bowed down.
    - b. They dug a pit in my way,
    - c. but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah
  10. 7 My heart is steadfast, O God,
    - a. my heart is steadfast!
    - b. I will sing and make melody!
  11. 8 Awake, my glory!
    - a. Awake, O harp and lyre!
    - b. I will awake the dawn!
  12. 9 I will give thanks to you,
    - a. O Lord, among the peoples;
    - b. I will sing praises to you among the nations.
  13. 10 For your steadfast love is great to the heavens,
    - a. your faithfulness to the clouds.
  14. 11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
    - a. Let your glory be over all the earth!

IV. This song works because it has a hymn-like structure

- A. Musicians would understand it implicitly
  - 1. Compositions often have parts represented by letters – A, B, C
    - a. A represents a particular musical or lyrical motif
    - b. B represents another
    - c. C another
- B. And then songs often have a refrain – a repetition
  - 1. And this song has a refrain
- C. And the structure goes like this
  - 1. A, B, C
  - 2. Refrain
  - 3. And then it reverses itself
  - 4. C, B, A
  - 5. And then the Refrain again
- D. A – the first stanza, v 1, is an appeal to God’s mercy
  - 1. B – the second stanza, vv 2-3 are a testimony to faithfulness
    - a. In this case, God’s faithfulness
  - 2. C – the third stanza, v 4, is a description of David’s danger, his enemies
  - 3. The comes the Refrain
- E. Then C – the fourth stanza, v 6, reviews David’s danger, his enemies
  - 1. The B – the fifth stanza, vv 7-8 – another testimony of faithfulness
    - a. This time it’s David’s faithfulness
  - 2. And the A – the sixth stanza, vv 9-10, another cry to God
    - a. This time, a cry of praise
  - 3. And the song is capped by the refrain

V. A Musical Progression

- A. And like most great musical compositions there is progression
  - 1. Not mere repetition
- B. As the song unfolds it moves in two ways
  - 1. It moves in mood
    - a. The cry to God begins in v 1 as a cry for mercy
    - b. But the cry to God in vv 9-10 is a cry of praise for deliverance
  - 2. Psalm 57:1 (ESV) —
    - a. 1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
    - b. for in you my soul takes refuge;
    - c. in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
    - d. till the storms of destruction pass by.
  - 3. Psalm 57:9–10 (ESV) —
    - a. 9 I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;
    - b. I will sing praises to you among the nations.
    - c. 10 For your steadfast love is great to the heavens,
    - d. your faithfulness to the clouds.
  - 4. So, from mercy to magnification
    - a. From passion to praise
- C. And the song moves from despair to confidence

1. The first description of David's enemies seems overwhelming
  2. Psalm 57:4 (ESV) —
    - a. 4 My soul is in the midst of lions;
    - b. I lie down amid fiery beasts—
    - c. the children of man,
    - d. whose teeth are spears and arrows,
    - e. whose tongues are sharp swords.
  3. But then David is confident that God will turn the tables
  4. Psalm 57:6 (ESV) —
    - a. 6 They set a net for my steps;
    - b. my soul was bowed down.
    - c. They dug a pit in my way,
    - d. but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah
- D. And then the song moves is spiritual growth
1. As the steadfastness of God's character moves into growth in David's steadfastness
  2. First – God's steadfastness
  3. Psalm 57:2–3 (ESV) —
    - a. 2 I cry out to God Most High,
    - b. to God who fulfills his purpose for me.
    - c. 3 He will send from heaven and save me;
    - d. he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah
    - e. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!
  4. And then David's transformation in steadfastness
  5. Psalm 57:7–8 (ESV) —
    - a. 7 My heart is steadfast,
    - b. O God, my heart is steadfast!
    - c. I will sing and make melody!
    - d. 8 Awake, my glory!
    - e. Awake, O harp and lyre!
    - f. I will awake the dawn!

## VI. A God-Centered Hymn

- A. But the real reason this song works is because it is a song about God
  1. A lot of songs that characterize evangelical Christianity are not so much about God, but about ourselves
    - a. They are songs about who we are
    - b. How we feel
  2. That's true a of a lot of contemporary music
    - a. But it was also true of a lot of gospel song music in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- B. But the best hymns, the most enduring songs, are about God
  1. They have God as their subject and object
    - a. And that's what we have here
- C. Psalm 57 mentions God 24 times in 11 verses

1. Either by His name
  - a. Or by His personal pronoun
  - b. Or by a metaphor for His character
- D. “God” is elohim
  1. The most frequent title for God
    - a. The title which signifies His greatness
  2. It also is a plural Hebrew name
    - a. Encompassing the Triune nature of God
    - b. Father and Spirit most clearly evident in the OT
    - c. But also the Son in passages like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 110
- E. Then there is “God Most High”
  1. Which expands beyond the Hebrew people to every person’s God – whether they recognize Him or not!
  2. Remember Melchizedek?
    - a. Who was priest of God Most High
    - b. Who predated Moses
    - c. To whom Abraham tithed
- F. Then there is “Adonai”
  1. Which speaks of His sovereign reign and rule
- G. And just think of the wonderful metaphors for God’s nature
  1. It speaks of God as the shadow of His wings
    - a. As in how He holds fast His precious chicks close to His bosom
    - b. For protection in the midst of the onslaught of the storm
  2. Or God as refuge
    - a. The place where we can hide in safety
    - b. David finds himself in the cave of Adullam for this Psalm
    - c. He’s on the run from Saul
    - d. He’s by himself
    - e. But he doesn’t see the cave as his refuge
    - f. God is David’s refuge
    - g. You might have thought the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the garage was your refuge, but you would be mistaken
    - h. God was our refuge in the storm
- H. And did you catch the characterizations of God by descriptions of His attributes and nature?
  1. He fulfills His purpose for us
  2. He has all the resources of heaven at His disposal
  3. He is merciful, faithful and full of steadfast love
  4. His glory is over all the earth – indeed above the heavens!

## VII. A Song of Response

- A. And the song works because it calls for a response by His people
  1. As much as it is a song about God, there is much about David – and about us
    - a. At least in terms of our appropriate response to His deliverance

- B. When David is in distress he doesn't complain to his friends and neighbors
  - 1. At the beginning of this episode in his life he is alone!
  - 2. No! He calls out to God!
  - 3. "In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
    - a. Till the storms of destruction pass by.
    - b. I cry out to God Most High,
    - c. To God who fulfills His purpose for me." (Psalm 57.2-3)
- C. But then, confident in God's deliverance, look at his response
  - 1. "My heart is steadfast, O God,
    - a. My heart is steadfast!
  - 2. I will sing and make melody!
    - a. Awake, my glory!
    - b. Awake, O harp and lyre!
  - 3. I will awake the dawn!
    - a. I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;
  - 4. I will sing praises to you among the nations." (Psalm 57.7-9)

#### VIII. The Response of the Evangel

- A. The evangel – the proclaimer of good news
- B. For you see, David does not keep this news to himself
  - 1. He might be by himself in the cave
    - a. He was at the beginning of this episode of his life
    - b. But in due time he began to gather around him an entourage
    - c. A fellowship of the sojourners
    - d. His family
    - e. And a cadre of what would become David's militia
  - 2. So his song was not a solo
    - a. It became a congregational song
- C. But more than that, the song was meant to be broadcast beyond the congregation
- D. Psalm 57:9 (ESV) —
  - 1. 9 I will give thanks to you, O Lord,
    - a. among the peoples;
  - 2. I will sing praises to you
    - a. among the nations.
- E. This song of deliverance was to be learned by worshipers the world over
  - 1. Not just Jewish worshipers
    - a. But Gentiles too!
  - 2. And as we sing of our deliverance, may we sing it loud and clear
    - a. So the ends of the earth will hear it
    - b. And so many will believe in this God who is our refuge and strength

#### IX. The Response of Character

- A. But underlying the response of praise and the response of the evangel is the response of character

1. David discovers that an attribute of God is transferable
    - a. Theologians call it a “communicable attribute”
    - b. But don’t mistake for a disease – it is the opposite!
    - c. Like catching good health!
    - d. The faithfulness and steadfastness of God becomes David’s steadfastness
  2. “My heart is steadfast, O God,
    - a. My heart is steadfast!” (Psalm 57.7)
- B. Do you have a steadfast heart?
1. Is your heart more steadfast after this past week than it was before?
- C. Alexander Maclaren
1. For a fixed heart I must have a fixed determination and not a mere fluctuating and soon broken intention.
    - a. I must have a steadfast affection, and not merely a fluttering love that, like some butterfly, lights now on this, now on that sweet flower, but which has a flight straight as a carrier pigeon to its cot, which shall bear me direct to God.
    - b. And I must have a continuous realization of my dependence upon God and of God’s sweet sufficiency going with me all through the dusty day....
  2. Ah, brethren! How unlike the broken, interrupted, divergent lines that we draw....
    - a. Is our average Christianity fairly represented by such words as these of my text?
    - b. Do they not rather make us burn with shame when we think that a man who lived in the twilight of God’s revelation, and was weighed upon by distresses such as wrung this psalm out of him, should have poured out this resolve, which we who live in the sunlight and are flooded with blessings find it hard to echo with sincerity and truth?
  3. Fixed hearts are rare amongst the Christians of this day.
- D. Maclaren died a generation ago or more
1. But does not his sentiments apply even more to us in these days?
- X. The Refrain
- A. Then there is the glorious refrain
  - B. Psalm 57:5 (ESV) —
    1. 5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
    2. Let your glory be over all the earth!
  - C. It’s such a wonderfully uplifting refrain, let’s repeat it
    1. That’s what refrains are for – repetition
    2. Repetition – so we would cement it into our minds
  - D. Psalm 57:5 (ESV) —
    1. 5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
    2. Let your glory be over all the earth!

- E. This refrain tells the truth about God – the God of the Bible
  - 1. That He is indeed exalted
  - 2. Exalted even above the heavens
  - 3. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19)
    - a. As magnificent and glorious are the heavens as we see them on a cloudless night
    - b. And as magnificent the heavens are as seen from the Hubble and Webb space telescopes
    - c. God is exalted above the heavens!
- F. And His glory is over all the earth
  - 1. There is no square inch of this planet that does not reflect the glory of God
  - 2. We see the glory of God in the beauty of this extraordinary community, planted as it is amidst the floral displays and the aquamarine playground
  - 3. We see the glory of God in every corner of the globe where our people have gone
    - a. Some to visit
    - b. Many for their life’s work
  - 4. We see the glory of God in the amazing complexity of the microscopic world
    - a. As complex machines distribute the energy in the intracellular world
  - 5. We see the glory of God in the image of God every time we see another human
    - a. Whether they know God or not
    - b. Whether they reject Him or not
    - c. Every human displays His glory
    - d. Even when the human denies God he denies God with the very gifts God has given!
  - 6. We even see the glory of God in shear power and expanse of a category 5 hurricane
    - a. An ever-present reminder that we are not in charge here
    - b. We are not the masters of our own destiny
  - 7. And God is the author of history
    - a. He superintends the world to His appointed ends
    - b. Nothing will frustrate His divine purpose
    - c. His glory is indeed over all the earth
- G. But this refrain is not just about theological truth
  - 1. It’s not a statement of who God is in relation to His creation
  - 2. It’s a prayer that God might be exalted
    - a. That His glory might be made known
- H. How will we make known His glory?
  - 1. By the way we walk through our trials, our sufferings, our persecutions
    - a. Walking through them with faith
    - b. Walking through them with joy
    - c. Walking through them with steadfast love and kindness

2. We make his glory known when we praise Him even in the midst of difficulties
    - a. For David composed this song long before his plight was over and he was vindicated
  3. Will you be the answer to this prayer?
    - a. “Be exalted, O God, above the heaven’s!
    - b. Let your glory be over all the earth!” (Psalm 57.5, 11)
  4. Indeed, by the way you walk through these trials you not only proclaim the glory of God to your friends and neighbors
    - a. Both here and abroad
  5. You proclaim the glory of God in the heavenly realm
    - a. So that angels learn of the glory of God – from you!
- I. Ephesians 3:10–13 (ESV) —
1. 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
  2. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,
  3. 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.
  4. 13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

- XI. Can you resonate with this song after this past week?
- A. Did you sing with David as you cried out to Him for His mercy?
  - B. Did you find God to be the faithful provider, caring for you under the shadow of His wings?
  - C. Did you discover God to be your refuge?
  - D. Were you transformed by His character, growing in steadfast faith?
  - E. The world cannot sing this way after having gone through the challenges and devastation of Milton
    1. Can you?

## **Benediction**

Psalm 18:2–3 (ESV) —

2 The LORD is our rock  
and my fortress and our deliverer,  
our God,  
our rock,  
in whom we take refuge,  
our shield,  
and the horn of our salvation,  
Our stronghold.  
3 we call upon the LORD,  
who is worthy to be praised,  
and we are saved from our enemies.

Go in the strength He supplies!