

Psalm three, O Lord, how many are my foes? How many rise up against me? Many are saying of me, God will not deliver him. But you are a shield around me, O Lord. You bestow glory on me and lift up my head to the Lord.

I cry aloud, and he hears me from his holy hill. I lie down and sleep. I wake again because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side. Arise, O Lord, and deliver me, o my God.

Strike all my enemies on the jaw and break the teeth of the wicked. From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.

Good morning. Is it good to see a familiar face? I guess not. Okay. I may not be that familiar because I hang out in Bedford all the time with Tim Thompson.

What a job.

God helps those who cannot help themselves. I know of a family that has lots of problems, and the problems, in part, stem from bad decisions. The father has fathered. The man has fathered several children with different women. At one point, several children were living in the same house, sharing a father but having different mothers.

In the course of time, one of the boys became extremely attracted to his half sister. He was obsessed with her. He burned in lust for her, and then he overpowered and assaulted her. It was horrible. The dad did nothing about it, even though he knew and was angry.

Also, the full brother of the girl who was assaulted became extremely angry at his half brother and at his dad. He suppressed his anger for a while, but eventually it grew and became all consuming. And finally, one day, this boy acts upon his anger and kills his half brother who had assaulted his sister. Then the boy sets his sights, his father, who did nothing. So the boy takes his time.

He plots, and he plans to take his father's power, his money and his father's life. The boy is very careful. He's calculated. He's so sinister and shrewd in his ruthless desire to destroy his dad. As the plan begins to unfold, the father gets wind of it, finds out what's going on, and by the time the father finds out, it is extremely dangerous.

So the father has no choice but to flee. So the father, King David, tells everybody in the palace, we have to leave, and we have to leave now. And he begins his flight from Jerusalem to escape an attack from his son, Absalom. As King David leaves, he crosses the Kidron valley and ascends the Mount of Olives. He's weeping.

He's weeping. David walked up the road to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, his head was covered and his feet were bare as a sign of mourning. And the people who were

with them covered their heads and wept as they climbed the hill. David's grief is complicated. His emotions are complicated.

If you know the rest of the story, you know that Absalom, the angry, rebellious, avenging son, is eventually killed in battle, something David did not want. And when David finds out that his son is dead, he's overcome with emotion and he bursts into tears and he cries out, o my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom. If only I had died instead of you. O Absalom, my son, my son. This story is found in two Samuel, chapter 13 through chapter 18.

And it's hard to read. It's just so tragic. And yet it's also interesting because it's instructive. It reveals the principle that we reap what we sow. And David is experiencing a lot of consequences from a lot of poor choices and bad decisions that really go all the way back to his lust filled encounter with Bathsheba.

At this point in his life, King David has committed adultery, he is murdered, and he has made tragic parenting mistakes. But hear this. Don't miss this. David, in spite of all that, continues to trust God. He continues to believe God loves him.

And I really believe David knows God better than most of us. And he seems to understand God's grace, and he understands God's mercy, and he understands the deep love that the father has for his children. As flawed as we all are, the story of David and Absalom stands behind Psalm three. Psalm three has an inscription or title or description. It says, a psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom.

Now, there's considerable scholarly discussion about these titles or inscriptions or descriptions. Were they a part of the original writing or were they added later to these psalms? No one knows for sure, but we know they're ancient. And if you look at it, you go way back to the third century BC. As Alexander the Great's greek influence was taking hold of the world, Jews, along with everybody else, started speaking Greek.

And so because of this, the hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek. It's called the Septuagint. And the Septuagint was translated in Alexandria, Egypt, back in the third century BC. And here's the relevant point. When those scriptures were gone from Hebrew to Greek, those inscriptions were there.

So they're very, very ancient. If they're not a part of the original thing, I don't know. I'm kind of a nerd. I find them really interesting. Too.

Of 150 psalms, about 115 of them have inscriptions, and about 15 of them point to a story. Some people call them story psalms because they point to something that happened. And psalm three is one of those, a psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom. I make it a practice to try insert myself into the story of scripture. I want to be there.

I want to insert myself and experience it and watch it. And so when I think about this, here's what I imagine. I imagine all this mess is over. And David's now back in the palace. He's back on the throne.

It takes a while, but things settle down a bit. Now David is older, he's calmer. And I think in a quiet, reflective moment, he thinks about Absalom.

And I think his creativity is fueled by his grief. And he decides to write. So he writes a psalm or a song. And as he remembers that first night of flight, he writes, lord, how many are my foes? How many rise up against me?

Many are saying of me, God will not deliver him. Selah. Now, Selah is a bit mysterious. It's probably, though it's probably just a musical notation that indicates a pause or a rest. And as David begins reliving that night of flight, he pauses.

And then he continues, but you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the one who lifts my head high. I shout to the Lord. I call out to the Lord. And he answers me from his holy mountain.

I lie down and I sleep. I wake again because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear, though tens of thousands assail me on every side. Arise, Lord. Deliver me, my God.

Strike all my enemies on the jaw. Break the teeth of the wicked.

From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people, Selah.

So on that first night of running from his son Absalom, picture this. King David is barefooted. The king has no shoes. I think he's shocked by his circumstance. I think he's weary from the flight.

He's emotionally drained and, and dejected. And I imagine in that state, he leans upon a stone, rests upon a stone and reflects on the situation. Is this really real? Is this happening? It was so surreal.

And as he processes the situation, I think he hears the words of the enemy whispering, maybe shouting in his ear, God will not deliver you, you murderous adulterer, you failure of a father. God doesn't care about you. You've messed up too big. And as those words of accusation try to settle, David takes them captive. He holds them, and he looks at his shield.

He sees his shield. And he is reminded of God's protection and God's presence. And he knows, he believes that God is for him and not against him. Even now, even though, and hear this, he is a murderer. He is an adulterer and he has failed as a father.

David believes and he trusts, which is the essence of faith. He trusts that God still loves him and lift up his weary head. David prays as he cries, thinking about Absalom, the son he loves so deeply he's now trying to kill him. David prays as he confesses that he is unable to do anything to help himself. David knows God helps those who cannot help themselves.

David prays and he receives peace. Peace that surpasses all understanding, that allows him to sleep. Can you imagine? So David sleeps in peace. Even as the enemy lurks in the darkness, David sleeps in peace, cradled in the arms of his loving, compassionate father who understands all of our weaknesses.

In the morning, David wakes up. I imagine he smiles as he sees his shield right there. And he remembers God's presence. He's fully aware of God's protection and sustainability, sustaining power. He is not afraid, no matter what.

He cheers the Lord on with a morning greeting. Arise, o Lord, be my deliverer again today.

As for my enemies, strike their jaw and break their teeth. Now, I wish David hadn't said that, but has anybody ever felt that way? And that's the beautiful thing. These are words that are very real. And that's one of the beautiful things about the psalms.

They're just filled with honest, authentic articulations and expressions of all kinds of emotion to God who understands how we are. As David concludes this psalm, he concludes his reliving the night of flight with a final reminder that God alone is a deliverer, God alone is a the savior. And he asked, God, help us all, be our helper, those we cannot help ourselves. Now, psalm three is reflective of one story, and that's the story of David at Absalom. But I believe it can be applied to lots of different situations because really, when you look at it, it's a psalm about trusting God.

It's about trusting him in threatening situations. It's about trusting him when we cannot help ourselves. It's about trusting and believing that he loves us, even though we feel that we are unlovable and not worthy of love. It's about trusting him in the middle of our messes, the messes that we make for ourselves and the messes that people like to give us. If you were to take psalm three, and its main point about trusting God.

We had a little exercise. What would you write at the top? What would your inscription be if we took it? Psalm three. And its main point?

About trusting God and threatening situations. About trusting God in the confusion that often leads to doubt about trusting him when we cannot help ourselves. What would you write at the top? None of us are in the same situation as David, but we all face all kinds of challenges all the time. What would you write?

A psalm of Mary when the doctor said cancer advanced six months. Maybe a psalm of James when he was so lonely he could die. A psalm of Joe when he found out he lost his job.

A psalm of Jessica when she found out her husband was cheating. A psalm of a mother who's watching her daughter struggle and doesn't know what to do. A psalm of a father who feels like a failure.

What would you write above? Psalm three.

Psalm three works for those times when our world is rocked and turned upside down, when we're betrayed and lied about and undermined. Maybe I shouldn't tell you this, but probably, like many of you, all that stuff happened to me a few years ago. And I could have written an inscription that said, a psalm of Allen when his dreams were destroyed.

What would you write? This psalm works for specific things that happen to us. Things like betrayal. But it also works for those chronic questions that we have about our value, about our worth, about our significance, about how does God feel about me. Those deep existential questions are related to events and things that happen, I think.

And the accuser, Satan just loves to get in our messes. He loves to work in them. And then he loves to release a barrage of all kinds of stuff.

Do you ever wonder about your value or your significance?

Do you ever wonder if you matter?

Do you wonder if anybody cares? Are you enough? Maybe you're too much. Are you concerned? Boy, if people knew what I really am like, phew, they would reject me.

I'd have no friends. Maybe you're tired of trying to keep up an image that is not really real, but you hope will influence people to like you. Or maybe you've given up on all that stuff and you've just embraced the idea. I'm just a failure. I'm a loser.

I can't do anything right. Nobody cares about me. On and on and on. Satan shouts, whispers and shouts again. God doesn't care about you.

You are useless. You don't matter. You are a failure. And then Satan loves to reinforce that he'll use anything, even a small mistake that we make to bring back. I'll let you here comes a video clip of that time.

Oh, my. And here's another one. Boom. Watch this. And it's several screens, videos in my head.

And then he likes to remind me of all the stupid things I said. Don't you remember when you said that I've learned to take those things captive. We can all do this. We can take these things captive. We don't have to go there.

Read psalm three. A psalm of David, the adulterer, the murderer, the failed father. Psalm three. A psalm of deep trust that counters all those questions that we ask about our value, our significance, our worth. All the questions we ask about God's love.

David knew his past and he knew the mess he was in. But it did not keep him from fully trusting God. He knew that God helps those who cannot help themselves. David was helpless. He needed a deliverer.

He needed a savior. He saw the enemy. He heard the taunts. He could have relived all his failures and just said, it's over. But he didn't.

He didn't doubt God's love. He didn't doubt God's concern. He trusted. We know our past. We know our failures.

And we hide so much of it. And God knows all of it, too. But he chooses to love us anyway, unconditionally, always. He knows how we're made. He is a compassionate father, worthy of our trust.

He is for us, not against us. For us, not against us. You know, David crossed the Kidron valley on his flight from Absalom, and I assume he crossed it going back to the palace.

A thousand years later, Jesus crosses the Kidron valley on his way to the cross. Now, I find this interesting. Matthew, the gospel writer, as he describes the cross, you know what he does? He goes back and grabs a psalm of David. Psalm 22.

And Matthew takes psalm 22 and significant portions of it and weaves it through his 27th chapter. Psalm 22. A psalm of David begins with the words that Jesus uses at the end of his life. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Those are hard to hear. They're haunting, they're lonely words, they're disturbing words and they carry a lot of mystery.

But in my imagination, I wonder if the Father hears those words as he hears those words from his beloved son, as he seemingly turns his face away. Is the father saying, my son, my son, my beloved son?

Was he crying out, my son, my son, as he took that temple curtain 60ft high, four inches thick, and tears it from top to bottom, signaling that everybody can come into the holy of holies? You now have access to the very presence, the very heart of God. And you can come here with boldness, and you can come here with confidence. You can come here to

receive help because you're helpless. That was an expensive curtain, but its price pales in comparison to the cost of what it takes to bring us into the presence of God.

But here's the thing. God wanted to do that. It was his desire. Psalm 22 is pretty dark for a while. And then David remembers who and whose he is, and he bursts out in praise at the end, just like psalm three.

It's a journey. It's kind of like a death burial. Resurrection. Jesus dies in darkness. He's buried in a dark tomb.

But as the sun rises on a Sunday morning, the Son of God has already risen. And Friday's cries of abandonment are now replaced with Sunday's words of encouragement to his friends, to his followers, to us. Don't be afraid. Peace be with you. As we enter into a time of reflection and response and worship, we encourage you to come and take communion here in a moment.

We encourage you to pray with each other or come to the corners and someone will pray with you. We encourage you. If you've not been baptized, and if you're ready to be baptized, we're ready for you to be baptized today. You just come to the front, and we'll take care of you. God helps those who cannot help themselves.

That's all of us. Without God's loving initiative, we would all be lost and without hope. Paul says it like this in romans five. When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. So we can have our sins forgiven by deciding to follow Jesus. And when we follow Christ, we need not fear. We can have peace. We can have joy.

We can have confidence. As we rest in God's love for us, he lifts up our heads so that we can see him. And we remember who and whose we are. We are the beloved children of God, and nothing can separate us from that love. Our past is forgiven.

The future is secure. So, you know, what we can do can relax and just be real. We can grow. We can change. We can dream new dreams.

Let me pray. Father, thank you for your unfailing, undying, unconditional love that's seen through Jesus. God, thank you for empowering us in your spirit, Father, as we spend the next few minutes thinking, help us to respond in a way that we need to. Thank you for the opportunity to take communion, as we're reminded with the bread about the body of Jesus and the juice about his blood that was shedden for our sins. Father, help us to hang on to each other and to be real and honest with each other as we make our way through this life.

And we look forward to that day when we're in your presence. It's in Jesus name we pray.
Amen.

Thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know? You can watch all of our video content, both current and past, on our YouTube channel? Visit [YouTube.com sherwoodoaks](https://www.youtube.com/sherwoodoaks) to watch messages, series and complete worship services.