

Well, good morning, everyone. I don't normally take a position at the piano, but when we started this series in the psalms, I mentioned that I was first introduced to some of these new pattern and style of worship way back in the late seventies when we moved to Guamo. We went to this little church, and the church we were at before here was a great little church, little pentecostal church. We sang songs like I'll fly away and when we all get to heaven, and then we go to this little church in Guam, and they're singing completely different songs. They were songs that came from scripture, so they were scripture and song, we called them.

And it was a great way to learn some of the psalms. But one of the psalms that I. One of the songs that struck me, and I remember, and I still sing it periodically, is this one right here.

Thou, Lord, are a shield about me. You're my glory. You're the lifter of my head.

Do you know what? Sing it with me. Thou, Lord, are a shield about me. You're my glory. You're the lifter of my hand.

Then it goes to this part right here.

Hallelujah.

Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. You're the lifter of my head. Of course, we'd sing that song, like, 20 times, which is. Which is where those new christian songs, people, gets the reputation that you. You sing it forever and ever and ever and ever, and it just goes on and on and on.

And. Yes, that's exactly what we do. But the good thing is those songs get locked in your head. That little chorus comes from psalm three, so we're gonna start with that this morning. Why don't you stand, and we're gonna read psalm three together.

It's a little bit longer than last week's psalms, so I know your feet have been being used during the worship. If you can stand, stand. If you can't, that's all right. Let's just read together. We're going to be reading.

Hold on. From the King James version. Are you ready? Are you ready? Let's do it.

Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Oh, let's hold on. Let's get there. Let's all get there. There we go.

There we go. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me, many there be which say of my soul. There is no help for him in God Selah, but thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill say la.

I laid me down and slept. I awaked, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord. Save me, o my God, for thou has smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone.

Thou has broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. Thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah. You can be seated.

There's an old children's song you may remember singing when you were younger. The farmer in the dell the farmer in the dell heigh ho, the derry o the farmer in the dell. If you know the song, it takes variations, depending on who's singing it. But. The farmer takes a wife the wife takes a child the child takes a nurse sometimes the nurse takes the cow the cow takes the pig the pig takes the dog the dog takes the cat the cat takes the mouse and the mouse takes the cheese and the cheese stands alone the cheese stands alone the cheese stands alone heigh ho, the derry o the cheese stands alone there comes a point in everyone's life where it seems you are the cheese.

You ever been there? If you're feeling cheesy this morning, I understand.

Emotional support. No, no one's giving you that physical support. No, that's nowhere to be found. Either you are alone, or at least it feels that way. Feels like a place of deep isolation.

And maybe again you feel a little cheesy this morning. Maybe you're feeling like that's you this morning, where it's just you against the world. And I hope that's not the case. I know it's not the case, but if you feel that way, today's psalm is a reminder that even in your most desolate times, the one who has placed his trust in God is never the cheese. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this reminder today from David that you are with him even the most difficult and isolating and alone times. May we be encouraged by your word this morning in Jesus name. Amen. Psalm three is a psalm of David. We know David because many of us know the stories of him being a shepherd boy.

And he played the harp in King Herod's palace. He killed a giant. He warded off lions and tigers and bears against the sheep. If you are a deeper student of David, you know that he successfully sort of united all the tribes of Israel into one kingdom. He was the golden boy.

Israel. But when we get to this psalm right here, we are reminded that David experienced moments where he felt very alone. And this is one of them. This is not only when he feels alone, but he's also running for his life. And you might think, oh, this is when King Saul is running after him.

But that's not the case this time. The person who is attempting to capture, perhaps even kill him, is his own son, a boy named Absalom. Now, you can read about Absalom in two,

Samuel 13. I encourage you to do that at some point in time. Don't do it now unless you're really bored already.

And then look up psalms two, Samuel 13. You can read that. But Absalom was sort of a golden child if you were a golden child in your family, you can identify with Absalom if you weren't. We can all picture this guy, can't we? He was tall, he was handsome.

He was a great athlete. He had amazing hair. In fact, hair is a big deal with Absalom for some reason. He had a lot of hair. He was very proud of it, and he had a bitter grudge against his father.

You see, King David was a success on the battlefield and in the courts of diplomacy, but he failed in many respects as a father. He struggled at the very least. So David's family was made up of multiple wives, and these wives had children. And so there's a lot of siblings and half siblings in David's family. One of them was Absalom, and Absalom had a sister.

Her name was Tamardev. Absalom. And Tamar had a half brother named Amnon.

And Amnon raped his sister Tamar.

David knew that it had happened and expressed anger about it, but for some reason, didn't do anything about it. And so Absalom, in his frustration with his brother, decides to take matters into his own hands. And at a family gathering, he kills his brother Amnon. And then he hightails it out of town. He goes on the run, he goes into hiding.

Now, this is not the sermon where we unpack all your family stuff, because we've all got family stuff, don't we? But you just need to know that you are not alone with your family stuff. It gets bad. This is why when people say the Bible is just a bunch of fairy tales, I say, have you read the Bible? It is not a bunch of fairy tales.

It digs right into the depth of who we are as people in this world. David loved his son Absalom. And when he goes into hiding, David misses him and he sends word. Absalom, come back. Come back.

Come back to the palace. You are forgiven. Absalom.

Absalom. Comes back, but he never forgave his dad. And it started showing up, seeping out in little ways and sometimes in big ways. Slowly, Absalom begins to usurp his father's authority, to sort of cast little hints that maybe his dad isn't exactly who he lets on he is. He begins to speak against him to the people.

The scriptures say maybe things like, well, you know, a real man of God, a real king after God's heart, wouldn't let a rapist go free. Fair enough. But before you know it, Absalom's got a whole host of people on his side, even an army, who have pledged loyalty to him instead

of his dad. And when you've got an army, you've pretty much got the country. And Absalom declares himself the king.

And to make this horrible situation even worse for David, even his most trusted advisors and loyal friends switch allegiance and go over and join up with Absalom. Absalom, who has united all the tribes of Israel into one kingdom. He's the uniter, sees it all crumbling as he is forced to abandon the palace and run from Jerusalem, the center of Israel. He gathers what forces he can muster, some friends who are sticking with him, and he prepares to meet his own son in the field of battle. And so this is where we find ourselves in this psalm.

And I want you to just picture this, if you will. It's nighttime. The stars are coming out. It's getting dark all around the hills. Who knows what's out there?

Absalom and his cohorts perhaps are surrounding David. It's certainly far from the soft, billowy cushions and the lovely sleep he experiences in the palace in Jerusalem. Instead, he's looking at a pallet on the cold, hard ground that is going to be where he sleeps tonight and tries to make sense of all that has happened and where it possibly went wrong, knowing that he has to sleep because he's got a battle to win tomorrow. And that in that place where I picture him praying and worrying and stressing and wondering that he pens this line, lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they which rise up against me, many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God.

Selahe, if you're a leader, you know that there's always someone behind you looking for your position, trying to get their way in sometimes because that's what God's called them to, and other times just because they don't like you personally. Recent political events in our own country remind us that no earthly crown or throne or office is secure from being rocked or being toppled. And even the best king can see his kingdom falter. Even the best parent struggles, keeping his family safe and secure. And.

And one the wisest leader can misstep and find his support eroding and the tide turning against him. And this is where David finds himself right now. Even his closest friends are saying, david, you can't do this. You got to give it up. You got to step away.

You can't win this. Even God cannot save you. So as he pulls his cloak tighter against the night, he can only think of all the. All the things that happened, perhaps, that got him here, all the ways he failed. And maybe his mind goes back to his sin with Bathsheba.

Maybe his mind goes back to all the ways he lied. Maybe his mind goes back to the fact that he orchestrated the murder of one of his soldiers. And, of course, his mind has to go back to this issue with Tamar and Amnon and Absalom and what he could have done different. The problems he tried to hide or the problems he tried to ignore. And if you've ever been there in the middle of the night where you are wondering how in the world are we going to survive this, then you know what David's going through right now.

Maybe you think I deserve what's happening to me. If I'd done something different, it's no wonder people are turning on me, the way I acted, what I said, what I did. My mistakes are too many. I'm too far gone. Even God cannot save me.

But there's a word in this psalm that is so important. The word is this. Selah. No one really knows what this word means. People have tried to figure it out.

It doesn't exist in modern Hebrew. Many scholars think it's a musical term. Maybe it's a place where something shifts. Maybe the tempo increases, maybe the volume increases. Maybe the key changes a modulation.

But regardless, this pause, this shift, allows time for the reader or the singer to. To process what has just been said, to think about it, to ponder it, to pause and reflect. Just stop, Selah. And think about this for just a moment. And so David puts a pause there, and he does this.

And it's important he stops. Selah. Wait. Did I just say that God was unable to rescue me? Did I just say that my shame and my guilt were irredeemable, that God couldn't do something with this whole mess?

Am I giving credence to the words of my enemies? Am I believing what my enemies are? Saying about me and how God will take care of me. David says, selah, okay, stop. Take a deep breath and remember, God.

Remember, God. Do you belong to the Lord? That is the question. Do you belong to the Lord? Now, the question is not, do you do everything exactly right?

Are you perfect in all your ways? Do you never make a mistake and say the wrong thing and wish to heaven God had sent you a different direction that day? That is not the question. The question is, do you belong to the Lord? David said in another psalm, Lord, no one is blameless.

If you were to keep track of our sins, who could stand no one. So that's not the issue. The issue is this. Are you the Lord's? Psalm 34 22 says this, the Lord will rescue his servants.

You are not abandoned. Your situation is not irredeemable. You will survive this. No one who takes refuge in him will be condemned. You need to remind yourself of that.

That's all right. Paul needed to remind himself of that, too. In the letter he wrote to Timothy, he says this even as he felt abandoned and alone and forsaken by the very people that he trusted to stick with him to the very end. He says this in two Timothy 4:18. He says, the Lord will rescue me from every evil attack.

The Lord will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom, to him be glory forever and ever. Amen. If you belong to the Lord and follow David's lead, follow Paul's lead, follow their example, begin to pray to and sing out with more confidence and more trust. Thou, O Lord, are a shield about me. You're my glory.

You're the lifter of my head. Thou, lord, are a shield. That shield, that word shield. When we think of that word shield, you may think of that thing you hold in your hand that. That you kind of point like this.

The arrows are coming at you, and you're just fighting them off and you're just diverting them with the shield. But that word shield is this word ma gain. And it has this idea of being all encompassing. So maybe picture six soldiers with their backs to each other, just turning like this, pushing and fighting all attacks on all fronts. This is this idea.

Some of the translations in your bibles will. Will refer to this, a shield for me, but some will say a shield about me or around me. And I love those translations because it gives the proper picture here of what's happening. Front and back, left and right, up and down. Everything is covered.

No part of the body is exposed to the fiery darts of the enemy. So not only does the Lord protect you from physical danger, as David sings here. But he also becomes David's glory and the lifter of David's head. Now, if you thought David's glory was all about the palace and the. And the crown and the throne, well, there in the middle of the night, out on that lonely wilderness hill, all that's gone and it may never be restored.

If you thought David's glory was his lineage of sons, who would continue his royal line and royal legacy and continue that promised line, well, those relationships seem to be in question right now, too. That's not his glory. If you thought David's glory was his family's reputation in the community, well, that's been trashed. That's not David's glory. And if you thought David's glory was being a man after God's own heart, and that that would somehow protect him from making really, really bad decisions, that would somehow keep him from being a poor parent, that would somehow keep him from being absent in leadership, well, look at where he is now.

David says, my glory is not any of that. My glory is you and you alone. The prophet Jeremiah wrote this beautiful song as well. Jeremiah 923 and 24. He says this, thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness and judgment and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, saith the Lord. I'm going to divert just a little bit because I think there's something really important here that I've got a glimmer of, and I'm going to talk until we land on it.

You are loved by God.

That doesn't mean that the Lord will not execute judgment. You may have to experience the ramifications of what you did. David is experiencing it right now, but you are loved by God. And even in his judgment, he extends and exemplifies loving kindness. And the end result is this righteousness that he wants to bring about in our lives, where we experience the bad things that come because of our own bad things, but in the process, we become the people that God wants us to be.

That's just a thought. Hold on to that. But Jeremiah reminds us, true glory is not found in anything but the Lord. And when David understands that, his countenance changes, he says, ah, you're my glory, and you lift my head and he begins to worship. Thou, o Lord, are a shield about me.

You're my glory. You're the lifter of my head. And he prays. He says, I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

There it is again. An opportunity for a shift in perspective. Just think, David says, let's just think about how God has taken care of me in the past. Even when I was knee deep in my own sin and bad decisions, God did not abandon me. My sister has this sign.

I don't know where she got this phrase, but I like it. You've survived 100% of your worst days. Amen. You've survived 100% of your worst days.

Those of us who belong to God can say that with this addendum. Not only have we survived 100% of our worst days, but because the Lord is our shield and our glory and the lifter of our heads, we are in a better place and in better shape, spiritually, emotionally, physically, all of that than we were before. God is doing a good thing. He is bringing righteousness into our lives. The Lord has never abandoned you.

He has only strengthened you through what you've gone through.

If you wonder if that's true, first Peter tells us the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. He doesn't take his gaze off of you, and his ears are attentive to your prayers. He does not take his eyes or his attention off of you. You belong to him. He loves you.

He's not giving you up. And David gets this. He gets this. So after he prays, he does something that speaks of God's power and his trust in God's power. In verse five, he says, I laid me down and slept.

In psalm 91, David talks about not being afraid of the terrors of the night. Let me just remind you, I'm one of those guys that wake up at 02:00 in the morning imagining all the worst. The

terrors of the night are good friends of mine. I know them very well. Whenever I'm in that place, I always remember my mom saying, Tim, you might as well sleep.

There's nothing you can do about it till morning anyway. I'm like, that is true. But my brain does not recognize my mother's voice at 02:00 in the morning. But David lays down and he understands that he belongs to the Lord. He lays down, he sleeps.

And then he says, I awoke and I looked around. Lo and behold, the Lord sustained me. Whatever was hiding out there in the trees, just over the hill, they didn't attack me. I'm still here. The Lord sustained me.

There's something about the bright light of morning that dispels the worries of the night. And as the bright sun rises, God has kept him. God is with him and God is for him. And if those things are true, then what is there to fear? Really, what is there to fear?

He says, I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me round about. Arise, o Lord. Save me, o my God. It is in your hands and your power to do so. For I know this looking back in my life.

You have smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone. You've rendered them powerless. This idea is of a lion whose power is in his jaws and he can rip something apart and says, in my life, God has broken the cheekbone. God has made all my enemies powerless. This is my past.

And I can just say to anyone who will listen to me, salvation belongeth unto the Lord and thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah. Think about that. God has sustained you through everything up to this point. I see no reason he's not going to do it until he's ready to take you home.

You are his.

Because of God and his mercy and his love, I can face anything. Nothing can separate me from his care and his oversight. The writer of to the Romans, I believe it was Paul says it this way in romans eight. Says, what shall separate us from the love of God? From the love of Christ?

Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword, our regrets, our shame, things man we wish we could go back and do over again? Will those separate us from the love of God? The enemies that are around us that want to take us down? Can those separate us from the love of God? As it is written, for your sake, we face death all day long.

We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. Where is your God? Who can save you now? No, Paul says, in all of these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. I am convinced.

I am convinced. Not because I want to believe it, because I have seen it. I am convinced through experience that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And we say that so sweetly. It's a beautiful thing.

But I believe Paul gets angry at those voices in our heads and around us. Who would dare us to question all of that? He says, no, no. Neither angels or demons, neither the present or the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing, nothing will be able to separate you from God's love.

So my enemies, either real or imagined, I've got a lot of imaginary ones. My spiritual enemies, my physical, emotional, my mental enemies are no match for God's protection and presence. Thou, o Lord, are a shield about me. You're my glory. You're the lifter of my head.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. You're the lifter of my head.

As I get older, one of the most beautiful invitations from Jesus is this right here. And it comes after he speaks of that whole judging and righteousness. And it's sort of a scary passage where Jesus talks about the judgment that God has entrusted to him against God's enemies. The day of judgment will be terrible for those who are opposed to God, but then he turns to all those who will listen, whose hearts are inclined towards the Lord. And he says this to all of you who are inclined towards God.

Come unto me, come unto me all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke. Not one that someone else has decided you need to wear, not one that you thought, oh, I probably deserve that. Take my yoke on you and learn from me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest in your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Some of us are carrying things from our past and from yesterday that are just weighing you down. Can I tell you, you don't get stronger through that. You don't make yourself better by carrying a yoke that God did not place on you are the enemies of your soul pressing hard against you? Are the mistakes of your life.

Catching up to you this morning are your regrets and shame. Screaming that there is no help for him in God. Are all the things that you took pride in gathering, your reputation, your family, your job? Are all those things slipping away from you? Do you see them crumbling around you?

Good. Good. That's a good place to be because it leaves you with only Jesus to turn to.

As we take communion this morning, Jesus endured the agony of the separation from God that sin brings. He took your sin and experienced that separation from God so that you don't have to. The bread and the cup are an invitation as well, to come to me and find rest. Come to me and find me to be your Lord and savior. Jesus says, come to me and allow me to be the shield about you.

Allow me to be your glory. Allow me to lift your head and replace your shame and regret with glory and beauty, to replace mourning and sadness for joy and delight. To lift your head out of your shame and fix it firmly on God your savior, to find rest for your soul. In so doing, we find that we are upheld by the Lord. We awake and we go, ah, the Lord is sustaining us.

The Lord is my sustainer. Heavenly Father, this morning we come weak and weary.

We find our heads beating against the rock at times.

We find our souls parched at times and dry and panting. And all around us we hear the wolves and jackals and the enemy is crying out, there is no help for him in Goddesse, but there's honey in that rock and there is water in that stone. And you say anyone who will turn to you will experience it.

So, Lord, like David, may we turn our attention to you, maybe fix our eyes on you, allow you to reframe our thinking, to stop and pause and say la in this moment and remind ourselves of how you have been our shield and buckler around us, to find again our glory, not in anything of our own making, but in you and you alone, and allow you, once we get in that selah place, to lift our head, to look around and say, ah, look, the Lord has sustained me. We give you thanks for being our shield and our glory and the lifter of our head. In Jesus name and in Jesus, amen.

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