

Sunday 14th of June 2020

Our Rock and Refuge - Psalm 62

Talk by Kemi Ogundipe, Prayers by Hazel Wilson

Good Morning, a warm welcome to St John's Worship. I am Kemi . Thank God we can connect through technology to worship, but it is not real. I am missing the real church worship and I can't wait for churches to be unlocked so we can worship together as family.

I will read the psalm of the day Psalm 62 titled "God our rock and refuge" and will unpack it and finish with a short prayer. Hazel will lead the intercession and I will conclude the service with a blessing.

Reading – Psalm 62

- 1-My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him.
- 2-He alone is my rock and salvation; he is my fortress, I shall never be shaken.
- 3-How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down- this leaning wall, this tottering fence?
- 4-They fully intend to topple him from his lofty place: they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse.
- 5-Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.
- 6-He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall not be shaken.
- 7-My salvation and my honour depend from God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
- 8-Trust in him at all times, O people; pour your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.
- 9-Lowborn men are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.
- 10-Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your hearts on them.
- 11- One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong,
- 12- And that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Talk

The Covid -19 Pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is ongoing. The outbreak was first identified in Wuhan China, in early December 2019. The world health organization declared the outbreak a public emergency of international concern in January and a pandemic in March 2020. The disease is scary and worrisome and has caused a large majority of people to feel fear and anxiety because there is currently no vaccine or preventative treatment for it, and one must avoid touching face, nose, and mouth in order not to spread the disease and protect yourself too. The only prevention is basic hygiene, rub your hands with sanitiser, cover face with mask, and social distancing of two metres apart from individual on street and everywhere. On getting home wash your hands with soap for twenty seconds and dry.

The disease has resulted in more than 279,000 deaths and over one million have recovered including the Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the Bishop of Rochester James Langstaff and the future King Prince Charles in Isolation for fourteen days.

The impact caused the country's economy a significant recession. It has shrunk from 2% due to total lockdown stay home, Protect NHS and save lives in the UK, each day as the Crisis deepens fear and anxiety of contracting the disease deepens in most people. Even at the time the lockdown was lifted, a most people were still worried.

The situation is critical, during this extra ordinary time my perception is we are facing a test of faith. How would a large majority of people get over fear and anxiety of covid 19 to get their lives back on track this unprecedented time?

Our psalm today is God our rock and refuge written by David when he was seeking refuge during Absalom's rebellion. He already lived a full life; his quiet confidence as stated in the poem can be seen in the account in (2 Samuel Chapter 15) of the events that shook his life. By faith he cried out to God his rock for refuge out of the depth of despair placing all his hope in God and knowing that he was in control allows him to wait patiently for him to rescue him.

As people of God, we are not meant to have pain free lives, we are not supposed to have all the answers, or the entirety of our existences figured out, we are not supposed to never fall, never mess up, never trip to lose our faith momentarily, this life was not meant to be easy for then there would be no purpose. God created us in his image to live, love to find our individual meaning to honour him, to know that we will be challenged, shaken and exhausted by weight of the world but we will never be alone.

Verses 1-8 David expressed his feeling to God and reaffirmed his faith during his adversity, as God's people, our earthly journey is both of mission and comfort, when our souls wait upon God, when we joyfully give up ourselves, all our doings to his will and wisdom, when we leave ourselves to all protective care of God and patiently the situation with full satisfaction in his goodness, by his grace he will support us and by his protection he will deliver us.

Russell's message in the book of Romans couple of weeks, says "At one time the gentiles were without hope because their ministry don't know God but because of the unity in Christ that was in place, the Jews and gentiles were able to praise God together, now they have Christ's hope; although we didn't earn it". We have been given that great hope through the death and resurrection of Christ, they have Christ hope so too we all have hope, we have joy and peace and power of the holy spirit live in us and strengthen us so that we can trust in the promises of hope, joy and peace. God loves us immeasurably.

He is our only rock and salvation, creatures are nothing without him, therefore, we should set our mind on things above, trusting in God our hearts are fixed, if God is for us, we need not fear what man or Coronavirus can do against us. David put his confidence in God, for he sees the overthrow of his enemies. It is good to wait upon the Lord our rock and refuge and we should charge our souls to have such constant dependence on him to make us always easy, if God will save our souls, we may leave everything to his hand. Knowing he is our rock and refuge all shall turn to our salvation. David's faith in God advances to an unshaken steadfastness because he held on to God as his rock and refuge so his joy in God improved into a holy triumph.

Those who have experienced the comfort of the ways of God can share as testimony to others the good that is given when we trust only in God. We must always trust in him, and not at any time to

put that trust in ourselves or creatures, which is to be put in him only. We trust in him to guide us when in doubt, to protect us when in danger, to supply us when in need, to strengthen us for every good work. We must lay out our wants and wishes before him, and patiently submit our wills to his, being our rock and refuge, this is pouring out our hearts. God is a refuge for all, for as long as we take shelter in him.

Verse 9-12: David warned against trusting in men, those that depend on men are disappointed, we must be careful even when we have affections for them. The true believer receives all from God as a trust and calls to use it for his glory as a servant who must give an account. Isaiah 61:8 tells us God loves that judgement should be done among both between magistrate and subjects and between neighbour and neighbour, he dislikes all injustice and when wrongs are done to his people by their oppressors and persecutors, he is not pleased with them; not only because they are done to his people but because they are wrongs against the eternal rules of equity.

If men do not do justice, he loves to do judgement himself in giving redress to those that suffer wrong and punishing those that do wrong. God has spoken, that power belongs to him alone, he can punish and destroy. Mercy also belongs to him alone he encourages us to trust in him and let us trust in his mercy and grace and possess in his expecting mercies from him alone.

My personal experience during the crisis is to tell we have a great big God who is in control, who can overturn a Challenging Situation to a joyous one. At the middle of March and the beginning of the month of April, in Lenten season before holy week, the peak time of Covid 19, I stopped working due to movement restriction, and stayed home to save the NHS. I can't work from home so it was a good break from work but the sad part of it was that I was overwhelmed by the fear of contracting the deadly disease which resulted in me being confined at home for almost two weeks. I was fearful, was unable to exercise, or walk daily, and listening to news and hearing the death toll and number of people infected frightened me. It was scary but praying everyday was the key thing. On the evening of Easter Sunday, I found myself walking out of the house for a routine walk for one hour. My thought was 'this is misery, but is it? Because Jesus Christ has risen today my chain of fear has gone. Can I have a new hope through the death and resurrection of Christ? I could not come to terms with any of this. The irony of it was that God is good all the time, and to cut the story short, that was the start of the daily walk routine. Praise God for that.

Looking at the Scenario of coronavirus pandemic, for every challenge and difficult situation and God in charge, he will be our father and his unconditional love will pull us through. Everything will work out for the best. A large majority of people could get over fear and anxiety of contracting the disease. In Luke 24:13-16, the disciples on the road to Emmaus had given up. We must not be focused on our fear and anxiety. If we do this, we have lost hope that Jesus walks beside us, we will be walking in the wrong direction away from the group of believers working tirelessly during the peak time of the spread of the disease, such as the Essential workers, NHS Staff, Supermarket staff and others. We are likely to miss Jesus and withdraw from the strength found in these groups of people when we become pre-occupied with our dashed hopes.

Only when we are looking for Jesus in our midst, we experience the power and help he can bring. God loves us, he walks with us, we are never alone, and his grace is sufficient to keep us going currently.

May God help us, Amen.

Let us pray: - Father, we thank you for speaking to us today through your holy word. We ask that these words of life, truth and hope would continue to impact us. May your love and grace follow each of us, refreshed and blessed by you. All these we ask in Jesus's name. Amen.

Hazel: -Intercession

Jesus said, 'Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son'

Thank you, Loving Father, that we can come to you at all times, and in all places – that You are closer than hands and feet. Thank you that You hear, that You care, that You answer – and that nothing we ask for takes You by surprise. Loving and faithful Father, we give You thanks for Your blessings which are there each day. Give us eyes, ears and hearts to appreciate them – and thank you that though the world is in such turmoil, its needs are only surpassed by the opportunities You give us for service.

Faithful One, so unchanging, Ageless One, you're our Rock of peace
Lord of all, we depend on You – we call out to You, again and again
You are our Rock in times of trouble; You lift us up when we fall down
All through the storm Your love is the anchor. Our hope is in You alone.

Proverbs 28:13 says, 'He who conceals his sin does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces it finds mercy'

We come Loving Father, to confess that we have failed you; as individuals, as a church family, as a nation, and as part of Your creation. We have so marred Your image, that people look at us and fail to see You, because of our active antagonism and injustice to others, our self-serving, or our indifference; and humbly we ask for Your forgiveness and mercy. Help us to keep short accounts with You – to take our guilt as it comes, directly and simply to You – and to mourn our sin so that we can be restored to a close and loving fellowship with You.

Loving Father, we come to pray for healing, restoration, peace and provision for every nation across the globe – knowing that although we cannot mention every need, Your eyes see what we do not, and Your ears and heart are open to all who call upon You in faith.

We pray for victims and perpetrators, for both need Your love. We pray for all who are abused, particularly by those close to them, or by organizations that should be trustworthy: for those kidnapped or taken into modern slavery. We cry to You for the poor and downtrodden; for those who have suffered or lost loved ones and livelihoods due to the pandemic; or from man's inhumanity to man. We pray for those whose greed, addiction and criminal activity overpowers them, and causes harm to them and to others. We plead for all who are frightened, lost and lonely, and have no refuge or firm foundation for their life. And Loving Father God, we give You thanks for all those, of whatever faith, culture, race or ethnicity who are putting their lives on the line to care for others, in so many different ways.

We lift Father, particularly to Your loving care, those whose faith and trust in You singles them out for harsh and unfair treatment – be their Rock and refuge – and may they know the truth of Psalm 62 'He alone is my Rock and my salvation, He is my fortress I shall never be shaken'.

We continue, Loving Father, to ask Your guidance and heavenly wisdom for those scientists and politicians who need to serve and lead people to safety and economic well-being. Give those searching for a vaccine creativity, and unity of purpose across borders; and may the 'new normal' that emerges from these difficulties be one of co-operation, care, selflessness, and equality. Since every man is made in Your image, every human being is worthy of honour and respect.

Loving Father, we pray for all those known to us within the wider family of St John's; our neighbours and our own families who are in particular need – remembering Emma and her brother-in-law and nephews; Tom Davies; Val Beckway; Anthony Wedderburn and particularly those of the church family who cannot be easily contacted. (SILENCE FOR PRAYER).

As rules regarding church buildings begin to be relaxed, we pray for wisdom for Ian, Steve and the PCC, who meet tomorrow evening. May safety and spiritual nurture be carefully considered and balanced – so that Your house may again be a house of prayer. And we ask Father that Your plans for the future leadership of St John's may be fulfilled in Your time.

Finally, Loving Father, help us to find our rest in these troubled times, in You alone. Remind us that You are our rock and strong fortress, and that if we trust in You we will never be shaken.

We ask these prayers in the strong name of Jesus our Rock and our Defender. Amen

Conclusion: - May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. And the blessings of God almighty, the father, the son and the holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen.