

My Feet Nearly Slipped

15 March 2020

Psalm 73

Pastor Russ Hightower

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: What is your favorite (or pet peeve) coffee mug or bumper sticker theology? Why?

Worship: Sing or read through the words of the hymn, *O Love That Will Not Let Me Go* by George Matheson

O love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee.
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine oceans depths its flow.
May richer fuller be.

O light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee.
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
that in thy sunshine's blaze its day.
May brighter fairer be.

O joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee.
I chase the rainbow through the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain.
That morn shall tearless be.

O cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee.
I lay in dust's life's glory dead,
and from the ground there blossoms red.
Life that shall endless be.

Bible Passage & Guiding Question (*The following question is intended to help frame your discussion. Keep it in mind as you read the bible passage and review the sermon summary together.*)

Bible Passage: Psalm 73

Guiding Question: What new perspective does Psalm 73 give you about God and the current circumstances of our world?

Sermon Summary

Is God good all the time? It's a big question – a question of trust made technicolor in light of a virus that has upended our world. Throughout history, pandemics have taken people indiscriminately and by surprise. The catastrophe is collective. Beyond spreading disease, it churns up great swaths of fear in its wake. The psychological toll can be oppressive. As Christians, what resources do we have to deal with that?

God's word can be of deep comfort to us – especially the psalms – words to cling to and find strength in when the waters feel too deep. But they will only scratch the surface of our anxiety if we miss their context. (For example “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” was written while Paul was in prison, unsure of his fate.) Psalm 73 is a vision of robust faith and a powerful example of how we can turn to God in such turbulent times:

Our Doubts (v1-2) – There's a myth that Christianity believes doubting is bad. But throughout the Bible, we see devout followers of God bringing their doubts before Him. These stories embrace the fact that life will cause us to wrestle with our faith. Because healthy doubting is what leads to real faith. Surely God is good... but so much is in upheaval, and His goodness becomes a problem for us. The danger is when these doubts cause us to trust ourselves more than we trust our Creator – to think that because we cannot see a reason for something, then there

must not be one. To go down this path is to assume our own omniscience while placing limits on God's power.

God's Goodness (v17, 21-24) – Sanctuary is being in the presence of God. It's what we need most when we're consumed by the scariness of the present and lose sight of the truth. As we become overwhelmed, we cling to our own abilities, trusting ourselves more than God. What is vital in these moments is to have God reorient us – to help us remember what is most important – to recall His holiness and let it wash over us. Because despite our doubts about his goodness, God doesn't walk away from us (Rom 8:28). This is the comfort and joy of Good Friday – that before we ever believed, Jesus took the full weight of our sin and brokenness so that we might have life in Him.

What do we do about it? – Our faith affords us resources to move toward and love people in the midst of such dark times. We can look to the greats of our faith and how they dealt with calamity as an example. Our goal should be to love our neighbors with the love we have experienced in Christ. God shines brightest in the darkness. He has done something definite about the brokenness of the world. And so we move forward with wisdom – not recklessness, but with creative thoughtfulness. Because in the face of overwhelming circumstances, we have the chance to do overwhelming good. In this rare time when literally everything has stopped, each of us has been stripped of our busyness and given the opportunity to have conversations about what really matters – that in the face of fear, we have comfort that God is bigger than all of this and hope because He has and He will take care of us.

Discussion Questions *(It's better to wrestle deeply with a few good questions than to gloss over many.)*

- The author of this Psalm is believed to be Asaph. Who is Asaph according to 1 Chronicles 15:16-17?
 - Why did Asaph begin to doubt and forget God's goodness in Psalm 73:1-15?
- Why are we so prone to doubt God's goodness toward us?
 - What is usually going on when we "almost stumble" into complete doubt?
 - What are we to do with our doubt and fear when our world looks like it's going upside down?
 - What resources do we have?
- From verses 17-19, what did Asaph discern and where was he when this happened?
 - What does it mean to enter into the sanctuary of God?
 - Where and when does this take place in your life?
- Discuss Asaph's confession and repentance as described in verses 20-22.
 - When have you experienced this type of repentance and why?
- Use verses 23-28 to finish this sentence. "Even though I nearly slipped, even though I am a weak and fearful sinner, nevertheless God..."
 - How do you draw near to God? How does being near God (vs. 28) lead us to evangelism?
- What new perspective does Psalm 73 give you about God and the current circumstances of our world?
 - What courage or encouragement does this Psalm give to you?
 - How does this Psalm help you feel your need for the Lord?

What Can We Be Praying For?

Spend some time drawing near to God by praying together for medical professionals, first responders, children out of school, parents home from work, grocers, the elderly and marginalized.

Engage & Experience

What really matters when our world is confusing and scary? How can we care and love our neighbors creatively, thoughtfully and wisely? How can God be using these situations to provide opportunities for conversations that really matter? We have provided a card that you are invited to use to serve your neighbors who may need your help at this time. You Are Not Alone Postcard link [here](#).

<https://pacificcrossroads.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Hello-Neighbor.pdf>