

Rest

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[0 : 0 0] Who fears heffalumps being abandoned, his small size, and being jumped on by Tigger? Ah, Piglet. Piglet. Dear old Piglet, he is anxious about everything and anything, but what's he most anxious about? Heffalumps. Piglet often wonders how he can fake a headache so that he doesn't have to come face to face with a heffalump, which could be stuck in the trap, which he's set because he's scared that the heffalump is fierce, and so he wonders, maybe I can fake a headache and end up in bed, but then he thinks, oh no, if I end up in bed, what will happen then? Poor Piglet. Everything is a worry to him. And you know, I think that we can all relate to a piglet at one level, can't we? We humans are prone to worry.

It seems that every day has an element of worry built into it. Will I struggle to pay off the mortgage? Will my kids turn out bad or will they be okay in the end? Will my health hold up? Am I really worth marrying? Do I have any genuine friendships? And you know, to be honest, many of the times we have good reasons to worry because life's uncertain. Yes, our health could be on the brink of collapse. The next payment of the mortgage may fail. We may end up lonely and so on and so on and so on. But do we need to live with a mind that's spinning out of control, wondering what's about to happen next? Do we really need to worry as much as we do? Can we rest? The psalm we have read brings hope because the psalmist declares to us today that yes, rest is possible. That we as people can experience deep rest. We can experience deep rest even when our most instinctive reaction is to worry. And there is one big and simple message that keeps popping up through this psalm. And the constant message is this, you can trust God. You do not need to worry. You can trust God. When you are afraid, trust God. When you are at your wits end, trust God. When you're anxious about all things that are going on in your day-to-day life, trust God. Uncertainty, unpredictability, all are a feature of everyday life. But there is one thing that is certain in this world and that is God. He is the one thing that we can trust and on which we can base every aspect of our life. And because of that, we can rest.

Though the message is simple, the psalm is helpfully realistic and accounts for our struggles with worry. This is not a message saying, trust God and all your worries will vanish in an instant.

But the psalmist here is urging us to persevere in our trust in God, even when everything seems hopeless. He can tell us this. The psalmist can tell us this because he has experienced God's rest, even in the most difficult of situations. When he felt that the end was in sight, when he felt that all hope had gone, he was able to rest because God was trustworthy.

And in those moments of worry, in those moments of terror, what the psalmist did? The psalmist did two things. He silently reminded himself about the truth of God. And then, with growing confidence, he then spoke the truth about God to himself and to others. And that's kind of where we're going to go today. So, the first thing, the first thing I want to bring out is found in verses one to four, and that's on page three in your booklet. And the first great lesson I think we can take today is this, remind yourself of God's truth. Our culture kind of commends this idea of self-talk as a way to help us get through the tough times. And, you know, self-talk's a good thing. It rightly encourages us to transform our inner kind of voice from negative to positive, and that's a good thing.

[5 : 01] I was needing a bit of an inner voice change yesterday. I had, yesterday morning, was just kind of up and down. It was like, so I forced myself out of bed at nine in the morning. I was going to do a park run. I know. Imagine. Then, get there. Park runs cancelled. Yes. Magic. And then, all of a sudden, those with me said, oh, we'll just go for a run anyway. I thought, oh, grim. So, you're kind of plodding around, kind of plodding being the word. And you're, well, you're maybe not, but I'm thinking this to myself. This is awful. What am I doing to myself? I just want to cry. Now, that's the inner man speaking to me. It's pretty negative, but the positive kind of going should be something like this, isn't it? This is amazing. This is so good for me. I just want to sing and dance and power on through. And before you know it, you've got an extra few steps. And so, often the world says, just change the voice from negative to positive. But that's quite tough because we're feeling negative.

We're feeling down. It's pretty hard to kind of fix ourselves up. And so, in times of stress and worry, what Christianity teaches is this. Don't try and change the inner voice yourself, but actually, take the focus away from yourself and put the focus on God.

The Christian argument is this. If you really want to help yourself in your times of trouble, take your eyes away from yourself and place your eyes on God. Put your focus back onto God.

And here in this psalm, we see this in action. We see how the psalmist quietly reminds himself of the truths about God when he faced worry and anxiety. As David sits on the throne, now, this is King David. He is the kind of most revered king of all Israel. He is the great king of Israel.

He sits on his throne and he's there and he knows he has a lot of what we call frenemies today. You know the people who are as nice as pie to your face, but behind you, they're plotting your downfall.

[7 : 20] So, he's got these people, oh, King David, you're amazing, you're wonderful. How can I serve you? But then, as soon as they tottered out of the royal courts, what are they doing? They're posting on social media fake news. They're gossiping lies and orchestrating a campaign of destruction against him.

And King David feels alone. He feels insecure. His kingdom is under threat. And because of that, so too is his position. All the prestige, all the power associated with the throne are insecure.

Look at verse 3 and 4. That explains, How long will all of you attack a man to bury him like a leaning wall, a tottering fence? They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure and fall, so they bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse.

As he suffers, his trust in God's love is faltering. He's struggling to believe that God is good.

He is hounded by the thought that actually God doesn't care for him. So uncertain is he and so embattled is he that he cannot even pray to God. And so what does he do? He simply repeats the truths that he knows to be true about God. He repeats the line, For God alone my soul waits in silence. From him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation.

[8 : 55] My fortress I shall not be greatly shaken. How often can we feel like King David? In the heat of hardship, we can often struggle to believe that God loves me, that God cares for me, and that God can be trusted. Sure, we can say these truths, but it's hard for us sometimes to shift them from our head down into our heart. They so often fail to penetrate. It seems so unbelievable at times. When your mind is racing with all sorts of angry and hopeless thoughts, and as your isolation intensifies them all, we need to be like King David. We need to quiet ourselves. Because God alone is our refuge. God alone is our fortress. Once you interrupt your soul, then you begin to move away from your worries onto firmer ground. David wants us to remember that God is a rock. He's a fortress. He focuses on what Teresa calls the strong and the stable characteristics of God.

When life is shaking all around. He goes to the strong, solid image characteristic of God when he is unsteady. In the midst of trouble and worry, we need to plant ourselves in the only thing which is strong, which cannot be shaken. We must place ourselves, we must plant ourselves on the rock that is God.

It is there where we will find rest for our soul. To David, the rocks and the fortresses were visible and were real physical places of refuge as he tried to escape, as he tried to avoid his enemies.

But for us today, we're not really being chased out of the rock. But we have a better rock. We have a better refuge.

Jesus is our rock and our refuge. Now, I don't know if you remember this story, but Jesus tells a story in Matthew 7. And in it, he asks his listeners to build their lives on the rock and not on the sand. Because when the storms come, those who are built on the rock stand firm. And as he's telling the story, he is telling them, actually, I am the rock. If you build your life on me when the storms of life come, when hardships come, when hardships come, and you've built your life on me, I will not be shaken.

[11 : 57] And because of I will not be shaken, you will not be shaken. You will remain steady and secure, even though it seems that everything else is going belly up all around us.

Because it's to the rock, Jesus, that we too are invited to come and to find rest. In Matthew, again, Jesus says to the listeners, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest.

Achieving rest is hard for us. And it's hard because we just can't predict what happens next in life.

It's hard for us because we don't have that much power to change that much in our environment. To truly rest, to enjoy soul rest, to have your eternal core at peace, what we must do is this.

We must build our life on the rock that is Jesus. He alone can be truly trusted. He alone is the constant source of rest. When faced with the storm and the trials in life, when you feel alone and isolated, quietly remind yourself of who God is. Remember the words of Jesus and go to him for rest. For he is our rock. He is our safe and good refuge.

[13 : 42] So the first thing is when we're struggling, when we're finding it hard to rest, we think and remind ourselves about the truth of God. Then what we're going to look at is basically from verses five to the end.

And there we have God's truth brings confidence and hope. When I was a boy, the hardest thing to do was this. It was always in class. The hardest thing for me to do was to put my hand up and to give an answer.

Hated it. Could not do it. Just was petrified that I'd get it wrong. However, there may have been one or two times where I was more than a thousand percent sure I had the correct answer.

And so I can't like... Yep. So and then I would be asked and then I'd get the answer right. I thought, oh, yes, you had answer. And then I'd feel a wee bit more confident and then I might be able to even answer the follow-up question.

Then I'd crawl back into my shell and not be seen for the next four years. But you see, what we have in this psalm is, is David with increasing confidence.

[14 : 57] So the next section is David's feeling a bit more confident about things. And this is one of the things that makes the psalm so brilliant is that it's pure raw honesty.

You know, when David's worried, he says he's worried. And he doesn't say, yeah, you know, I prayed to God, I trusted him and boom, it was all sorted.

No. When David's worried, he's being honest with us. In verse 5 and 6, you'll see that it kind of matches verses 1 and 2. What we have is he needs to keep reminding himself of this truth over and over and over and over and over again.

He needs to keep going back to these simple truths and he keeps needing to tell himself that God alone is my rock and my salvation.

But what we notice in the second 5 and 6 is this, that his confidence is growing a little by little. See in verse 2, it said, I shall not be greatly shaken.

[16 : 04] By verse 6, it says, I shall not be shaken. And then in the second 5 and 6, in the second half, there is no word of his enemies.

All that he talks now is about God alone. The enemies are to the back of his mind. He now focuses on God and God's character. So this is a psalm which kind of walks us through this process of putting our worry to a side and becoming increasingly restful in God.

Before, at the start of the psalm, King David couldn't even speak directly to God as he was so uncertain. And all he could do was remind himself of the truth of the Bible.

But now he's speaking to himself and as he grows in confidence, he's going to speak to others in verse 8. God is at work even when David feels distant.

God is in gently infusing David's life with truth. And as it begins to take hold, as it begins to sink down from his head to his heart, he is moved to remind others to trust God alone.

[17 : 15] King David is urging us to turn over our worries to God because God is that solid rock and fortress that we need in life.

He is that refuge where we can enjoy true soul rest. Our culture and our inner instincts often react badly to the idea of handing over control to God, handing over our worries to God.

We are sold the lie that we can be increasingly free from worry if we achieve wealth. And with that wealth will come the opportunity to have a power and influence.

And you know what it's like. How many of us joke with our colleagues, I'd love to win the lorries. I could leave this place behind and leave all my worries behind. It's hard to shake the idea that money solves everything.

It's so deeply ingrained into our society and even maybe into us. Yet the myth that power and money brings the rest that we crave is nonsense.

[18 : 23] And it's even been found to be true by the studies. There's this place in Boston called the Boston College Center of Wealth and Philanthropy.

And in a recent study, they discovered that the very wealthy, and we're talking the hundreds of millions kind of club here, thought that they needed a quarter more of their wealth to live a secure life.

A quarter more. And that they admitted that the money that they had amassed had caused them deep anxieties involving love, work, and family.

And David, in all his royal power, would absolutely agree with the findings of that study. David was a man of vast wealth and power. And he explains in verses 9 and 10 that power and money don't give you the rest that we presume that they can give.

Both are but a vapor. They can be gone in a breath. The stock markets can crash. Or you can be shamed online. Neither of them are certain. Our soul craves a deeper comfort than what money and power can bring.

[19 : 41] It longs for a more lasting and a better rest than what can be offered to us in this world. True rest can only come from looking beyond our world and to God himself.

David is urging us to let go of our instinctive go-to places to find comfort and rest. He's saying, don't go to power and money.

I know that's what you instinctively think will bring you safety and freedom and rest. But he's saying, they don't work. There's temporary fixes. He's saying to us, go to God.

Go to him and let him be your rock and your fortress. And let yourselves rest in him. And through the passage we have been reminded of God's strength, power, and stability.

But in verse 8, that's on page 4, we're now reminded of God's friendship. God's friendship.

[20 : 44] I don't know about you, but I really struggle sometimes to share my fears and my worries. It's hard to be vulnerable because we are fearful of rejection.

It's hard to be vulnerable because we are fearful of what others might think. We're fearful of confessing our worries because we wonder what people might do in response.

But in God, in God, we have a loving and powerful listener who is moved in love and compassion when we cry out to him for help.

Our God is full of fatherly compassion. He is our protector. He is our protector. But he is also our loving father who wants us to pour out our hearts to him, as it says in verse 8.

In trouble, share with God all of your hurts. All that confuses you. All that concerns you. Pour out your heart to him.

[21 : 56] Let it all out. Hold nothing back. He is not going to reject you. He is not going to turn against you. He is going to continue to love you. God will respond to your cry for help.

He will answer with compassion. His answer might be a gentle reminder of past faithfulness, of how he's helped you through a previous experience.

It might be a reassuring word that with him that you have a certain hope that he will bring the trouble to an end one day.

It might be soon. It might not be soon. But what he will do is he will walk with us through our trouble. And as we go through our trouble, he will be giving us rest.

He will be our rest. This psalm describes the situation of King David. But it also points us forward to another king.

[22 : 59] King Jesus. King Jesus would display the full power and love of God that we read about in verses 11 and 12.

Power belongs to God and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. The power that Jesus had allowed him to cure disease, drive out demons, still the waves, and to even raise the dead.

His steadfast love took him to the cross. It allowed him to give up his rest so that we could experience secure rest for our souls.

And he did that by bringing us peace with God. Flowing out of that act of powerful love comes our deep soul rest.

We can enjoy deep soul rest because though life may be uncertain, we know that we are knitted together with God.

[24 : 04] That we are knitted together with the God of certainty, with the God of power, and with the God of love who walks with us through life's ups and downs.

That we are knitted together with the God of love. And this morning, the psalmist offers us the opportunity to pour out our hearts to God when we are worried because of his great love.

The Bible offers us the opportunity to rest deeply, to have peace at our very core. A rest that is not determined by what we can do, but a rest that is determined by the freely given power and steadfast love of God.

And I would encourage you and invite you to allow yourself to rest in him.