

Psalm 55

Though friends and enemies may conspire against you, cast your burdens on God, the sustainer and protector of the righteous

Introduction

I greet you once again in the name of our risen saviour Jesus Christ. He has risen indeed, and today we celebrate Christ's resurrection. My name is Musa Ntinga from Christ Central Soweto. Today we remember the resurrection because through the resurrection Christ's work on the cross is vindicated. And with his vindication our guilt was vindicated as well. The resurrection placed us on the firm ground that we too will gain eternal life, for Christ our first fruits has made it possible for us.

Today we continue with our journey through the Psalms of lament and seeing God in our times of distress. As we find ourselves on lockdown due to the corona virus there may be many stresses that are undergoing. There are many hurts and anxieties that we as humans go through but very few compare to being betrayed by someone who is close to you.

As humans we invest a lot into our relationships, we have many people that we hang out with but off those people there is one we usually draw closer, and we develop a deeper relationship with. We share more than just casual conversation or sports; we show them our heart. We develop an understanding, a covenant so to speak of how we relate to one another and we can trust each other. So, when they do something that betrays us, when they side with our enemies. It hurts, it cuts deep, and we feel a sense of loss deeper than most. In Psalm 55 the Psalmist finds himself disoriented,

confused and terrified and worst of all this comes from a beloved friend.

A Despairing prayer (vs. 1-3)

The Psalmist begins with a prayer, really a plea for help. He is a deeply troubled man, a man surrounded by his enemies and they mean business. Their words have sent him into a state of panic. They have brought suffering on him and their anger is harassing him. He has no other place to turn so he cries out to God...

¹ Listen to my prayer, O God,

do not ignore my plea;

² hear me and answer me.

There is no time to waste on this one Lord, no time to sleep on it or teach me life lessons. I need you to hear me and answer me now.

Fear and trembling (vs. 4-8)

In vs. 4-8 we get a picture of his inner turmoil and he is fearful beyond words, vs 4...

⁴ My heart is in anguish within me;

the terrors of death have fallen on me.

⁵ Fear and trembling have beset me;

horror has overwhelmed me.

He is in anguish, literally he is shuddering and trembling, like a child before they get a hiding. Death is not some far away thought that he contemplates in his study or with friends, it is a reality waiting for him at the door.

His emotions of fear and trembling are so real he can taste them and the horror of it all is overwhelming to him. If you ever had a near death experience you have a glimpse into the mind and heart of the Psalmist, it is that feeling of *“this is it”*

(this is how it all ends) accompanied with the feeling of “*I am not ready for this*”. But ready or not death is here, and you are desperate for an escape.

In vs. 6 this is the wish of the Psalmist,

⁶ I said, “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!

I would fly away and be at rest.

⁷ I would flee far away

and stay in the desert;^[c]

⁸ I would hurry to my place of shelter,

far from the tempest and storm.”

If I could just wish this all away or fly away from these storms I would. Away from it all into a peaceful place but this is not possible. He has no power to get himself out of this problem, so he goes to his only means of escape, God!

Violence and betrayal (vs. 9-15)

He prays again in vs. 9 for violence and betrayal are the only things that surround him.

Lord confuse my enemies (those wicked people), let them be confounded like I am right now for currently they prowl the streets daily with malice and abuse. Evil is at work in city and lies are always in it. This image is picture of the tower of Babel, when man got together for the purposes of evil (Genesis 11). The Psalmist says intervene again like you did in the past and confuse them so that they don't succeed.

But then he continues and shows why this matters so much to him. He could endure the insults of enemy or the attacks of a foe for that is to be expected of them but, vs. 13...

*¹³ But it is you, a man like myself,
my companion, my close friend,*

¹⁴ with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship

at the house of God,

as we walked about

among the worshipers.

Enemies will be enemies, but you my best friends, the one I used to enjoy sweet fellowship with, we used to gather in God's house together and worship with the righteous but now you plot evil against me and side with my enemies. That hurts more than the plots of the wicked. This is one of the reasons why spies were hated so much during apartheid for it is your own people, a person who understands your pain and suffering, a person you trust more than any other that betrays you. This is why they were punished more severely because of that sense of betrayal. This is what the Psalmist goes through.

But the Lord sits enthroned from of old (vs. 16-19)

In vs. 16 we see a turn in the Psalm, rather than focusing on his volatile life circumstance and the friend who turned on him like Caster oil he focuses on God, the unchanging one of old.

Even though evil ones continue to conspire against him, and his friend sell him out, his confidence is in God. When he calls on God, he will answer, when he cries out God hears his voice.

He rescues him from harm, and he will humble the proud and evil.

He knows this, vs. 19, because he sits on the throne. He has sat on it from ancient times and he does not change. He is not like shifting shadows or a friend's affections. He keeps his promises and brings justice on the unrighteous.

The Lord sustains the righteous (vs. 20-23)

And so even though his friend attacks him and violates their friendship and promises. Even though his friend is two faced, on the one hand his speech is as smooth as butter, but his heart is full of violence and war. God is the one who will sustain him, he is so confident of God's love that he calls on all the righteous, in vs. 22 to...

²² Cast your cares on the Lord

and he will sustain you;

he will never let

the righteous be shaken.

But God goes beyond just caring for the righteous, He also brings justice on the wicked. Though they plot and plan their plans will be defeated by God.

Whatever his friend may do and plot, whatever schemes he may have,

But as for me, I trust in you.

New Testament

This Psalm of lament, though it started in fear and trembling it ends with confident hope in the God of justice, the God of the righteous.

The hope points us to the Hope we have in the resurrection, that though we may face trials and betrayals in this world, though we may sometimes fear and pray for escape, though evil men may plot and scheme and friends let us down, because Jesus Lives we can be confident that God that the righteous will not be shaken. This confidence is not in our abilities but because Christ died in our place so that will not face the wrath.

Remember brothers and sisters that Christ, while he preached good news to the poor, his enemies were plotting to destroy him. And they could not believe their luck when one of Jesus' close friends, betrayed him for a few silver coins. When Jesus was arrested his friends scattered and Peter even denied that he knew him. He hung on that cross all alone, with God even forsaking him.

Yet that was not the last word, death was the end but the beginning, Romans 4:25 reminds us that...

²⁵ He (Jesus) was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

When we trust in Christ, we can be confident that are counted among the righteous, not because of our works but because of God's grace to us through Christ's death. Christ's

resurrection proves that this work is complete, that God accepted it and we have hope of eternity.

But what of our enemies, what of the evil in this world that we see day and day? We see it all over, and sometimes it is directed at us and we struggle with it. In fact, sometimes it seems that being a Christian is inviting mocking, attacks and alienation. And many of us have lost close friends when they realised that we now trust in Jesus. Christ's resurrection gives us certainty that he will return and bring justice to this world.

As Acts 17:31...

³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

God's coming judgement is not an excuse for us to taunt our enemies or shun them because our Father is returning but a

call for us to show them mercy and point them to the king who showed us mercy. We become like Christ who,

²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; (1 Peter 3:23-24)

Cast your cares on the Lord for those who trust in him though they may suffer for a short while they will receive eternal life because of Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

Let’s pray...

If you want to find out more about us or listen to more talks you can visit our website at christcentralsoweto.co.za. Stay blessed.