

Psalm 5 “The Lord, Our Refuge”
Psalm 5
Luke 1:26-56

December 4, 2022

Psalm 5 is part of a group of five Psalms (Psalms 3-7) that explore the theme of refuge. Immediately after introducing the “blessed man” in Psalm 1, and then in Psalm 2 pointing out that the Messiah – the anointed King – is the Son of God, the one in whom we must take refuge if we wish to be blessed, the next five Psalms (3-7) explore what it means to take refuge.

Psalm 2 ended, “blessed are all who take refuge in you.”
So during Advent we are looking at these songs of refuge!

In verse 11 we now hear “let all who take refuge in you rejoice.”

The word translated “refuge” in verse 11 is found 25 times in the Psalter--
15 times in book One (the first 41 Psalms)

But it’s not just about the word “refuge.”
If you look at Psalms 3-7,
you will notice that only Psalm 5 and Psalm 7 actually use the word refuge,
but all five of them focus on the same idea.

David cries out for deliverance in Psalm 3,
describing Yahweh as a “shield about me.”
In verse 4, he speaks of how Yahweh answered him from his holy hill.
And notice the result:
When God answered David’s prayer,
he lay down and slept—he had found refuge in the care of the Lord.

Psalm 4 calls upon God to hear the prayer of the godly,
concluding, “in peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

Psalm 6 likewise calls out to God for deliverance..
Verses 6-7 speaks of how he floods his bed with tears every night;
without the deliverance of the Lord, he has no strength.
But then in verses 8-10 he declares that the Lord has heard his plea,
and therefore his enemies will be driven back.

Psalm 7 starts by declaring, “O Yahweh, my God, in you do I take refuge—
save me from all my pursuers and deliver me!”

These five Psalms of refuge will set us up for Psalm 8 (on Christmas morning) –
the Son of Man who has dominion over all things!

Sing TPH 5

Read Luke 1:26-56

Psalm 5 ends with a plea that “those who love your name may exult in you.”

And that’s where Mary’s song begins:

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...”

Mary’s song rejoices that God has finally done what he promised –
to all those who take refuge in him.

But Psalm 5 begins with a plea for help!

To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.

The title “to the choirmaster”

reminds us that the Psalms were sung by a choir in the temple.

David himself was responsible for arranging the Levitical choir
and preparing the music for the temple.

(Before the time of David, there seems to have been very little musical praise.
This was part of David’s distinct contribution to the worship of God!)

1. LORD, Please Hear Me! (v1-2)

Give ear to my words, O LORD;

consider my groaning.

² *Give attention to the sound of my cry,*

my King and my God,

for to you do I pray.

And David cries out for God to hear him,
acknowledging that Yahweh is “my King and my God.”

Again, the idea is that “if you do not answer me, then no one will.”
The Psalmist acknowledges that he has no other refuge.

“To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!”

a. For to You Do I Pray

Each section of the Psalm has a ‘kiy’ –

(the Hebrew word “kiy” simply means “for” or “because” –
and it generally gives the reason for something.

For that reason, I find it helpful to speak of the *kiy* to the passage!)

And in verses 1-2 the *kiy* is found at the end of verse 2.

Why should God hear me?

Because I pray to you, O LORD.

Why should God hear me?
Because I pray to him.

It's that simple!
Of course, it is worth thinking about *who God is* –
and *who I am* –
because God does not pay attention to everyone!

This is the important part of *taking refuge* in the LORD – and in his anointed King –
if you say “Lord, Lord” – but do not walk in his ways –
then don't expect him to pay attention when you cry out!

And that's way David works through this question, “Who is God?” in verses 3-7:

2. Who Is God? (v3-7)

a. You Hear My Voice in the Morning (v3)

³ O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you^[a] and watch.

Who is God?
He is the LORD who hears my voice in the morning.

The morning sacrifice was the first hour of prayer at the temple.
You may have noticed that verse 7 refers to the “holy temple” –
which wasn't built until several years after David's death.
This may suggest that David didn't actually write Psalm 5.
(After all, the phrase “A Psalm of David”
doesn't necessarily mean “by David” –
it could mean “for David” or “about David.”)

The reason why I always refer to Psalms of David as being David's voice
is because the text requires us to read the Psalm in the voice of David.

Whether it is by him or about him, the Psalmist is calling us to sing the song
with the voice of David.
Israel is being taught to see themselves “in David” –
which will be the pattern that the apostles follow
in teaching us to see ourselves “in Christ.”

The point of the morning sacrifice was to begin the day in the worship of God.
Psalm 5 was probably written to be sung at the morning sacrifice.
And while the first person singular may highlight David – and the Davidic king –

it would be appropriate for any Israelite who participated in the morning sacrifice (because, after all, the king is merely the embodiment of the people of God).

The point of the Psalm (as of the morning sacrifice),
is that our first thoughts of the day need to be directed toward God.

The daily morning sacrifice was to orient all Israel to the fact
that the Lord was the center of their lives.
This is why the early churches and the reformation churches
frequently maintained daily morning and evening prayers.
And when morning and evening prayers in the church building were impossible
(due to distance or schedules),
they encouraged families to meet together for daily (morning and evening) prayer.

We've made a lot of progress in the last 20 years!
We now have morning prayer three times a week during the week –
Mondays at the Caylor House – at 8:15
Tuesdays at men's group – at 6:30
Wednesdays at the Academy – at 8:30.
That's a start!

But as Psalms 3, 4 and 6 speak of going to your rest in the evening,
with your heart set upon the Lord,
so now Psalm 5 calls you to turn your heart to Christ,
and his sacrifice, every morning.

Because God is a God who hears those who cry to him!

Notice why David cries out to the Lord:
v 4 (here's the 'kiy')

b. For You Do Not Delight in Wickedness (v4)

*⁴For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil may not dwell with you.*

It is because God is just.
The reason why you take refuge in the Lord,
is because you are confident that he is not a God who delights in wickedness.
Evil may not dwell with him.

We've been reading through Leviticus in the evening service –
looking at the question of how can we approach a holy God?
How can sinners ascend the holy mountain of the LORD?

And the answer is that *they can't*.

Evildoers may not dwell with God!
Notice the progression of verses 4-6.

In verse 4, “evil” – the generic term may not dwell with God.

But then in verse 5 it gets more concrete:

c. You Hate Evildoers (v5)

*⁵ The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.*

There are two types of people in verse 5.

The “boastful” – the term literally means “to praise” –
but it is used in this sense to refer to those who praise themselves.
(This is the word used in Jeremiah 9:23-24,
where the LORD says, “let not the wise man boast in his wisdom,
neither let the mighty man boast in his might,
let not the rich man boast in his riches:
but let him that boasts boast in this,
that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD,
who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.
For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”)

Psalm 5:5 is using the term “boastful” to refer to those who boast in their own wisdom,
their own might, their own riches...

And the boastful will not stand before God.

We often think that education is the answer!
But all the knowledge in the world will not get you before God.
Others focus on obtaining wealth – financial security!
But wealth cannot purchase favor with God!
Others just want to be in control of their circumstances!
But power is fleeting.

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes.

All your education – all your investments – all your shrewd maneuvering
is for nothing.

Why?

Because God hates all evildoers.

“Evildoer” was translated “worker of iniquity” in the King James.

You could also translate it “troublemaker.”

You might wonder – how can God hate evildoers?
Doesn't God love sinners?

God loves everything that he made –
and especially humanity – whom he made in his own image!

And because God loves humanity – whom he made in his own image –
therefore he hates whatever harms that which he loves!!

A proper hatred is one that is measured and appropriate.

And God's hatred of evildoers is very appropriate.

When you put together the idea of the boastful – those who praise themselves –
and the worker of iniquity – those who make trouble –
you start to see the picture.

When we are full of ourselves, we start to think of ourselves as entitled to something.
And that sense of entitlement results in trouble – for yourself and others.

But if in verse 4, we heard that our God does not delight in wickedness –
and now in verse 5 we see that wickedness consists in being full of ourselves,
and making trouble for others...

then verse 6 must follow!

d. You Destroy Liars (v6)

⁶ *You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*

It's not just that God doesn't like it very much...

No!!

The LORD *destroys* those who speak lies!
Because lies are not just a minor nuisance.
Lies tear at the fabric of reality!!

Really.

Lies tear at the fabric of reality.

How did God create the world?

He spoke.
In the beginning was the *Word*.

If all of reality is spoken as the *word* of God.

Then every lie – every untruth – shreds the world that God made!

When we lie – when we say something that is false to what is –
we are seeking to unmake the world by our words!

That's why the LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.
Destroying with words and killing a man are not nearly so far apart as we like to think!

Satan used deceitful words to turn Eve away from following God –
and in the very next chapter Cain kills his brother Abel.

And ever since, we have been using words to tear down and destroy.
How can we return to the LORD?

If the LORD destroys those who speak lies,
how can we enter the presence of a holy God?

And yet David says in verse 7:

e. But I Enter Your House through Your Steadfast Love (v7)

*⁷ But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple
in the fear of you.*

This is why we need to see the importance of the Davidic “I”!
The singular voice here is the singular voice of David – the LORD’s Anointed.

This is why Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 go together at the beginning of the Psalter!

Psalm 1 – blessed is the *man* (singular) who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly –
but his delight is in the law of the LORD!
and Psalm 2 – that the LORD has set his Anointed on his throne –
and declared his Anointed – his Messiah – to be his Son!!

Blessed are *all* (plural) who trust in him.

As we gather for the morning sacrifice,
we do not come in our own righteousness!
We do not boast in our own wisdom – or might – or wealth!

We come to Jesus – the one who has entered God’s holy house,
through his own blood (not through the blood of bulls or goats!).

We enter through the abundance of his steadfast love!

We bow down – not merely *toward* God’s holy temple –
but *in* God’s heavenly temple!

We have access into the heavenly holy of holies!

As long as you remain evil, you *cannot* get there!

But through the sacrifice of Jesus – those who receive his righteousness by faith
can now enter.

If you are in Jesus Christ, then you are *not* evil.
For God hates all evildoers (v5)

He abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.

But notice how the Psalmist approaches the Lord:

“But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.”

It’s not because I’ve never done anything wrong.

It’s because of the steadfast love (the covenant faithfulness) of the Lord.

(Steadfast love translates *hesed*–

which refers to the ideas of faithfulness/love/mercy in a covenantal relation)

God is faithful to his covenant.

Remember his covenant?

The one he made with Abraham–

declaring that all nations would be blessed through him?

The one he made with Israel through Moses–

declaring that they would be the instrument of his blessing to the nations?

The one he made with David–

declaring that his son would rule forever at his right hand.

The Psalmist declares that we may enter the temple of the Lord

and bow down and worship before him,

because we come through the abundance of HIS covenant faithfulness (or steadfast love)

This is why God sent Jesus.

And as Jesus sang this Psalm,

he understood that it was the covenant faithfulness of the Lord that upheld him.

3. Lead Me in Your Righteousness and Make Your Way Straight Before Me (v8-9)

Verse 8 then asks God to lead in the right way.

⁸ *Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.*

My enemies are heading in the wrong direction –
and if I'm not careful, I will allow them to set my path.
And so I need you, O LORD, to lead – and make your way straight before me.

We are not given any specifics in this Psalm.
There is no particular situation named.

Why not?

Because – like most of the Psalms – this is not a piece of individual poetry!
This is a song for the people of God to sing with their anointed King!

This is a song for us to sing with Jesus!

And because God has made his way straight for *Jesus* –
because he has seated Jesus at his right hand in glory –
therefore we can have confidence that right now –
in your life –
God will do the same thing.

Because you are surrounded by the voices of your enemies!
You are surrounded by voices that would lead downward into the pit!

And the 'kiy' to this is in verse 9:

a. For Their Words Destroy

⁹ *For there is no truth in their mouth;
their inmost self is destruction;
their throat is an open grave;
they flatter with their tongue.*

Notice again how this is all about words!

“there is no truth in their mouth”

“their throat is an open grave”

“they flatter with their tongues.”

But at the heart of their words is their inmost self – which is destruction.

Their words destroy.

Their words tear down.

Their words lead to misery, death, and destruction.

Jesus taught us that it is from the heart that the mouth speaks.

When words tear down and destroy – that reflects a heart that is bent on destruction.

What, then, does King Jesus ask of his Father?

4. Make Things Right! (v10-12)

Psalm 5 concludes with David crying out for judgment against the wicked:

a. Make Transgressors Bear Their Guilt (v10)

*¹⁰ Make them bear their guilt, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out,
for they have rebelled against you.*

Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword,
and those who live by speaking evil of others,
shall fall by their own counsels.

One thinks of Haman, in the book of Esther,
who devised evil for the Jews—and who built a gallows for Mordecai,
but his wicked counsels came back upon his own head,
and he was hanged on the gallows that he built for Mordecai.

i. For They Have Rebelled

If they would repent – that would be great!

But David understands that the only way for God to make things *right*
is to bring an end to what is wrong!

Because if the wrong never changes, then the rebels will continue in their rebellion –
and more and more harmful words will keep shredding reality!

And more and more people will get hurt.

b. But Let Those Who Take Refuge in You Rejoice (v11-12)

That's why the Psalmist also pleads the case for those who take refuge in the LORD:

*¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may exult in you.*

i. For You Bless the Righteous

*¹² For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover him with favor as with a shield.*

Notice again the distinction between the plural (all who take refuge in you) in verse 11,
and the singular (the righteous – you cover *him* with favor) in verse 12.

After all, why do you seek refuge?
Is it not because your enemies are pursuing you?
The world, the flesh, and the devil have conspired to destroy you,
and now you have fled to the living God,
and you are saying, “judge between me and my enemies!”
“Do not let those who seek my life devour me!”

And so you flee to God, coming in the name of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ!

God is a righteous judge.

If he has declared you to be his son—his heir—
then you may flee to him and say “vindicate me, Father!”
Because you have made me your child—because you have declared me righteous,
Vindicate me!
Deliver me from my enemies.
There was nothing that David did to “earn” his place as a son of God.
He was the youngest son – a shepherd boy.
And yet God raised him up to be King over all Israel.
It was all the work of God’s grace.
David is not saying,
“I’ve been so righteous in myself, that you owe it to me, God!”
No, he comes to God as a son to his father,
and pleads “save me from my enemies”
“Remember your son—the one you have made to look like you!”

If you are in Christ Jesus,
if you have taken refuge in Him,
then you are righteous.
You are acceptable to God in Jesus Christ.
You have found favor in his sight.

Certainly it is all due to God’s grace—to his covenant faithfulness.
But I think that sometimes we tend to think that if it is of grace,
then it isn’t really true.
“Because I’m not righteous in and of myself,
therefore I’m not *really* righteous.”

No!

Think about what you are saying.
If you are saying “I’m not really righteous” –
then you are saying “Jesus blood can’t really do anything about my sin.”
You are saying that works are more powerful than grace.

But also think about the ethical effect of saying that.

I once believed that I could not help but sin.
I believed that I was a sinner—and if I am a sinner, then sinning is just “what I do.”

That is a damnable lie.

The Word of God does not speak of those who are in Christ Jesus as sinners.
That’s not who you are anymore!

When you were in Adam, then it was true—you were unable to avoid sinning.
But now that you are in Christ, you are able to avoid sin.
I did not say that you are able to be perfect.
But you never *have* to sin.
Sin no longer characterizes your identity.
You are no longer defined by sin.

If you are in Christ,
then all that is his has become yours.
And HE is righteous.
Therefore *you* are righteous in him!

So therefore,
be (in Christ) who you are (in Christ).

And as God has blessed Jesus Christ, and covered him with favor as with a shield,
so now God blesses you – the righteous,
and covers you with favor as with a shield.

And when temptation strikes,
remind the tempter that you are not his anymore.
Look the tempter in the eye and say,
“I don’t have to do that!”

It was in this context that the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians:
“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.
God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability,
but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape,
that you may be able to endure it.
Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.
I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.
The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?
The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”

We come to the Lord’s Table to find the grace to withstand the assaults of the evil one.