

# 8/1/2021 - Psalm 61 - "The Shelter of Your Wings"

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 August 2021

Preacher: Rick Deschenes

[ 0 : 0 0 ] We're going to be continuing our series in Psalms, and so we're looking at the second book of Psalms. If you're not aware, it's traditionally broken into five books of Psalms, and the second book starts in Psalm 42 and proceeds into the 70s from there. But today, I want to look at Psalm 61. And I had quite a few choices of Psalms to look at this week, but Psalm 61 really stood out as I was praying through the Psalms. And I think it's an encouraging Psalm. It starts in a dark place, but it doesn't leave us there. Many of the Psalms are that way, but I think this one is especially uplifting. And so I want to look at the words of David in Psalm 61.

But before we do that, I want to ask a question. Do you ever feel distant from God? Like he's silent. You can't hear his voice, and you can't sense his presence.

Probably if you've been a Christian for many years, you've experienced those seasons where you feel distant from God. But I think in the opposite, corporate worship here together, lifting our praise, taking communion together, always draws us close to God, right? I know right now is one of the closest moments throughout the week that we may feel with God, right? We feel near to him.

But then sometimes that doesn't last through the week, right? We go back to our lives, we get distracted by the world, and we feel distant from God. But this Psalm, Psalm 61, is a reminder of how, regardless of life circumstances, we can have nearness with God at every moment.

And that's what I want to focus on today. I want to focus on those seasons of drought when we feel like we're, as David said, in a dry and weary land. We feel as though God is silent and distant in our soul thirst for him. Maybe for some of you, today you feel closer to God than you ever have, right? But for others, maybe that's not true. Maybe you feel distant. Maybe you're struggling with anxiety, depression, loneliness, or even sin. And so you feel a distance from God.

[ 2 : 2 9 ] Maybe for some, you've nearly given up. You're tired of pretending that everything is okay. Tired of trying to come to church and act like you're fine when something inside of you is broken.

You feel like you're languishing at the end of the earth, right? And I want this message to be for both, for those who feel close to God and those who feel distant to God. And I also want it to be a reminder. Maybe you feel close to God at this moment, but in those moments, those seasons where you feel far from God, I want this Psalm to be a reminder of how you can find nearness with him.

David's life, I think, is amazing. He's one of my favorite people in the Bible. I'm sure you guys have noticed I talk a lot about David, but I think within the Psalms especially, we see just a range of emotions. He goes from the lowest lows of depression to the highest highs of praise.



And within the Psalms, we see both. Even within some Psalms, within just eight verses, we see him go from one side to the other side. And I think that's an encouragement for us, that David, a man after God's own heart, experienced these same turmoils, but he turned to God. In Psalm 61, we start out seeing David. He says he's feeling faint at the ends of the earth, and he's desperate to be close to God. He prays, he cries out to him, and he seeks his presence. He seeks his goodness.

Psalm 61 provides a model for us by which we can also draw near to God, regardless of our circumstances. No matter how distant we feel, whether it be loneliness, depression, or even guilt for our sin, we can always cry out to God. And I think this Psalm is a reminder of that. And so that's my aim for today, to remind us how we can find lasting nearness with God despite life's battles, suffering, and loneliness. And through this Psalm, I want to encourage us to be constant in joy, joy that overflows into praise. So please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 61. I'm going to read in the ESV if you'd like to follow along. It should also be on the screen, but I think it's better if we flip to our Bibles because you may not know, but I like to jump around Scripture a lot. So if you have your Bible open already, you may be able to keep up. But I tried to keep my cross-references down to a minimum this week. But let's read Psalm 61, verses 1 through 8. It starts out,

[ 5 : 1 6 ] Hear my cry, O God. Listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

Let me dwell in your tent forever. Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wing. For you, O God, have heard my vows. You've given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

Prolong the life of the king. May his years endure to all generations. May he be enthroned forever before God. Appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him. So will I ever sing praises to your name as I perform my vows day after day. Let's pray before we begin.

Father, we thank you for this time to come before you, to praise you, to exalt your name and your word. I pray that you will prepare our hearts to come into your presence, to dwell before you, and to receive from your goodness, from your word. Lord, we love and praise you and pray this in your holy name. Amen. So my first point, I want to look at the first three verses of this psalm.

I titled this point, Hear My Cry, O God. And that's where we begin. Before we jump into the verse, I just want to note that the historic setting of Psalm 61 is not really known, right? The authors of the book of Psalm don't tell us where or what place or what time this takes in David's life, but we know that he experienced many seasons when he was fleeing from Saul, when he was fleeing from Absalom, when he was fleeing from sin. He experienced many times where he was alone, where he was under attack, and also where he felt distant from God. And so we know this psalm comes from one of those places, right? Before we jump into the text, I want to ask another question. What about you? Have you ever felt totally alone as David did? Have you ever been isolated? For me, I thought of the movie Cast Away with Tom Hanks from 2000, right? To be literally totally alone with just a soccer ball with a face on it. That's a volleyball. Sorry, my apologies. Right? Totally alone with Wilson, right? And no one else to call out to. I think the loneliness we more often feel is not that of being literally alone.

[ 7 : 5 3 ] More often, we feel alone in the world, right? We may be surrounded by seven and a half billion people, which is an insane number. But sometimes we still feel alone, right? Sometimes we still feel alone.



I think the world tragically suffers from such loneliness. They may have families, they may have friends, but they still feel alone. No one to confide in, no one to go to for help. This has been especially true during COVID, right? We've seen suicide numbers going up higher than ever before as loneliness crushes the world in a dark place. And the reality is for Christians, we also suffer from such loneliness, from such isolation. Not all of us have brothers and sisters in Christ we can turn to to find encouragement. Sometimes we find ourselves alone. For some Christians, we worry about being judged or condemned if we turn to our brothers and sisters in Christ, if we confide in them.

This is especially true when the church becomes self-righteous and lacks a spirit of confession. We feel as though we have nowhere in the church to turn. Others, maybe they feel loneliness because of their faith. They're persecuted because of their faith, right? This is becoming increasingly true in our workplaces, in our communities, among our friends, that if we practice our faith openly, the world condemns us for it. And so we feel alone.

And there are also those around the world who for generations have faced martyrdom and persecution for their faith. Many times they do so alone. And this is where we find David in Psalm 61.

He's in a place of isolation. He's desperate. He's feeling distant from God, right? With nowhere else to turn. He must be reminded that he can never truly be alone, right? Even there in his moment, he must be reminded that there's nowhere he can go that God is not there.

[ 10 : 05 ] In another psalm, he remarks, even if I should make my bed in Sheol, in hell, God is there. Right? Nowhere he can go to escape God.

The reality David must be reminded of is that all we need to do is cry out to God. Cry out to him. He hears our prayers. But I don't want to give away the message, so we should look at the text before we get too far ahead of ourselves.

So look with me at verse 1 of Psalm 61. I don't think we'll have it on the screen, but you can look in your Bible. David says, Hear my cry, O God. Listen to my prayer. He recognizes that when he feels distant from God, for whatever reason, he begins by crying out.

We begin by crying out to him. Crying out to him in prayer. We lift our prayer up. And we also ask and expect that he would listen. We trust that he will hear.

We remember that this is a cry of humility and meekness. Right? As Jesus says in the Beatitudes, the cry of one poor in spirit.

[ 11 : 14 ] We don't come before him with any expectation or entitlement. Instead, we come to him crying out for his mercy and trusting in his loving kindness.

Whatever the reason that we may feel distant and isolated, whether it's inflicted by our conscience due to unconfessed sin, inflicted by our mind due to depression or anxiety, or inflicted by others due to persecution, it's the same. We cry out to him.

David continues in the second verse of this psalm. From the end of the earth I call to you, when my heart is faint, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. In this place, David feels as though he's at the ends of the earth.

He feels as far from God and as far from friends as you can possibly get. Right? He's living this castaway experience, even as he's in the world. But he calls out to God.

He asks that God would lead him, even as his heart is faint. He asks that God would lead him. He knows that in this situation, he cannot rescue himself. He cannot cheer himself up.

[ 12 : 22 ] He can't give himself a pep talk and crawl out of this hole that he finds himself in. Instead, he knows that it's God who will lead him to the rock that is higher than him.



What then should we pray when we're in this place? What should we pray? Seeing our inability to rescue ourselves, we pray that he would lead us to the rock.

When we feel distant from God, we can't draw near to him by climbing the mountain, coming into his presence, and entering his house.

Right? His place is higher than we can attain of ourselves. But when we pray, when we call out to him, he leads us to himself. That's his faithfulness.

Prayer in this way leads us into communion with God. He draws us near as we cry out and pray to him. The rock, as it's translated here, is a cleft within a mountain.

[ 13 : 31 ] David sees God as a place of security carved out of the mountain, a fortress of protection from his enemies. In Psalm 18, verse 2, one of my cross references, David says, The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Right? But before we move on, I want to note that David is doing something with his words here.

He's not just giving himself a pep talk about God being his stronghold. He's reminding himself of God's past goodness. He's reminding himself that he can trust God.

He knows this. He has experienced it. He can trust God. And so in verse 3, he says, For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against my enemy.

Right? He remembers who God has been and therefore who he will be. He's trusting in God's unchanging character, in his loyal love, and trusting upon his compassion, his mercy.

[ 14 : 50 ] It may be difficult to imagine God as a strong tower. I don't know what you guys picture when you think of a strong tower. Right? We don't really have castles in our day.

So it's hard for us to picture this. For me, I imagine, and I apologize for this illustration. The elders might throw me off stage for it. But I imagine Helm's Deep from the second Lord of the Rings movie.

And you guys remember that? Right? This impenetrable fortress that they retreat to in security. And it's not just a fortress, right? Within this fortress is a keep, which is an old word for a strong tower.

Within this fortress of 10 foot thick, 50 foot walls, sorry. Within this fortress is a keep, right?

Built into the side of a mountain, set high above these walls. And that's how David pictures God. Not just as a fortress that can be plundered by an enemy, but an invincible fortress.

[ 15 : 55 ] And so recognizing that he is this invincible fortress, he's reminded that it's a fortress he of himself cannot enter.

Right? If this fortress is invincible, it's only by God leading him that he can enter this fortress. That he can enter God's refuge. I think we should be reminded of the same, right?

We didn't climb our way into God's presence. He sent his spirit. He sent his son. And he called us into his presence. We never came into his presence of ourselves.

And we only return into his presence of him. An act of his mercy. Remembering his past goodness. David's faint heart was lifted from the ends of the earth into the presence of God.

The same is true of us, right? God's past mercies and past goodness are our source of strength. They breathe life into our faint hearts. Trusting that he will hear us.

[ 16 : 59 ] We lift our prayers to him. He turns his ear to us. And we find security and refuge in him. Solomon in Proverbs 18.10 said, The name of the Lord is a strong tower.



The righteous man runs through it and is safe. Amen. In my second point, I want to reflect on verses 4 through 5.

David says, Let me dwell in your tent forever. Let me dwell in your house forever. Having spent time meditating on and reflecting on God's past goodness, he finds a growing desire within himself to again dwell in the richness of God's presence.

He says in verse 4 of Psalm 61, Let me dwell in your tent forever. Let me take refuge. Under the shelter of your wing.

Those who know God, they delight in his presence. The Lord chose to dwell with his people in the tabernacle in the time of Israel. To invite his people into his presence.

[ 18 : 09 ] And as such, the longing of us, his people, is to dwell with him, to know him, and to be known by him. David knew to know God from a distance is to not know God.

Our prayer is not only to draw near to him, but to dwell in his presence forever. Note he says, Let me dwell in your tent forever. Both now and for eternity, we will be in his presence.

More than this, our prayer and our desire is to find shelter under his wings. To be protected by his loving embrace. Right? This idea of finding shelter under his wings is not that of being shadowed by his wings.

It's that of being embraced by his wings. To be protected by him. The desire of a child of God is to be treated like the prodigal son.

To know that when he hears our cry, when he hears our prayers, even when we're still a long ways off, he sees us and has compassion on us. He runs to us and embraces and kisses us.

[ 19 : 20 ] Right? That's what it says in Luke 15. Maybe this is not how you envision God's love. Maybe it's difficult for you to envision God's love in such an intimate way. Perhaps you've never experienced compassionate love of someone who protects you.

But this is how Jesus painted the love of the Father. To know the loving embrace of the Father is to be pulled into his arms that he wraps around you. To take shelter under his wings.

And to know that he's a strong tower and a refuge for you. Now the reality is we often face seasons where we feel loneliness and distance from God.

We feel as though we're at the ends of the earth. But we need to remember in those moments that all we need to do is cry out to him and trust upon his mercy. In that moment, you may not feel his literal embrace.

But you can trust that the spirit of the living God embraces you and compasses you as a son and offers you refuge. Continuing in verse 5, David says, For you, O God, have heard my vows.

[ 20 : 31 ] You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name. I want to take a moment to explore this idea, right? You have heard my vows.

That's not something I think we often think about in the New Testament, our vows to God. But the tabernacle, the tent in which God dwelt in David's time, was a place where offerings were brought before him and where vows were offered to the Lord.

Right? And these vows were offered by David in the presence of the Lord. The spirit of God dwelt literally in the tabernacle. And like David, we too can trust that he hears our prayers and he hears our vows.

He delights in our offering when we draw near to his presence. I want to explore this idea of vows a little bit more later on, but for right now, I want to focus on the truths that we find in these verses about having the heritage of those who know his name.



The first truth I want to point out is that not only will we dwell in his tent forever, but right now, for those who know him, the spirit of God dwells in each of us.

[ 21 : 46 ] Right? I think a verse that is encouraging is found originally in Leviticus 26.12, but it's quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6.16.

He says, I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Right? For David, this promise was a promise that was fulfilled only in part as God dwelt within the tabernacle.

But for us, this promise is fulfilled more fully. Right? It hasn't been fulfilled completely. In eternity, we will dwell with God, and he will walk among us.

But now, in this moment, through Christ, through his Holy Spirit, we are the temple. If you remember, the tabernacle was God's original dwelling place. Then he dwelt in the temple that David's son built after David passed away.

And now, that temple being destroyed, God's temple is us, his people in whom he dwells. 1 Corinthians 3.16 says, Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you?

[ 23 : 01 ] The third truth I want to point out is that we've been redeemed by God at a price. We're his, both now and for eternity. Hebrews 9.15, I think, points this out well.

Therefore, he is the mediator of a new covenant, and those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance since a death has occurred that redeemed them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

We've been redeemed by him. From these three truths, I want to point out an important point. Under this new covenant, we continue to lift up our vows before him.

A covenant is like a marriage. Both parties offer vows. What was God's vow under this new covenant? His vow was eternal life in his presence.

And what is our vow that we return to him? Faith. Faith in his promises. Right? Through Christ Jesus and his spirit dwelling in us, we've received, as David cried for, the heritage of those who fear the name of God.

[ 24 : 13 ] We trust that he hears our vows. We trust that he accepts our offerings. David brings up vows again a little bit later on, and we'll explore this more. But I think from here, the encouragement is that we have been given the heritage of those who know his name, who fear his name, and that is eternal life.

As we move into the third and final point, I titled this section, Sing Praises to His Name. And I want to look at verses 6 through 8.

Now from our place in history, having seen Christ's works completed, we look back on what David looks forward to. If we look at Psalm 61, verses 6 and 7, David prays, Prolong the life of the king.

May his years endure to all generations. May he be enthroned forever before God. Appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him. Now this prayer may seem like he's praying it about himself.

He was the king of Israel, right? And so you see in your Bible, it's a lowercase k, and so your conclusion might be that he's praying it for himself. And it's true that he is, in a sense, praying it for himself.

[ 25 : 37 ] If you look at Psalm 40, verse 11, David said, As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain your mercy from me. Your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me.

So David knew and he trusted. He had confidence that God will preserve us. He is our strong tower and our refuge. But I think it would be odd for David to pray over his own life that he be enthroned forever before God.



Right? I think maybe he's praying about another king whom he longs to see enthroned forever before God. Instead of praying this over himself, he's praying and trusting in God's covenantal promise.

He's trusting in the promise that God made to him, that through him, a king would come. The Messiah would come who would be enthroned and exalted forever before God.

And so we pray as did David. I think he expresses it best in Psalm 138, verse 2. I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.

[ 27 : 01 ] Right? Your name and your word. Exalted, enthroned before God for eternity. I think we can find encouragement if we look at the Lord's prayer.

We think about how he starts it, right? Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Right? What is he praying for?

He's praying that his name would be exalted. That his will would be done in the earth as it is in heaven. And so he's praying these same words.

That his name and his word would be enthroned forever before God. And so we pray the same as instructed by Jesus. I think it's so important that we don't throw away the Lord's prayer for its overuse, but remember the truth that it really reveals to us.

And so we trust in the steadfast love and the faithfulness of God. He brought to pass what David longed to see. We trust that we too will receive the heritage of those who fear his name, eternal life, and the glorious presence of the King of Kings.

[ 28 : 19 ] As we wrap up the sermon, I want to look at verse eight as David concludes his prayer. In verse eight, he says, so will I ever sing praises to your name as I perform my vows day after day.

And I go a little bit on a side trail here and then we'll circle back. But maybe you've heard this quote before. It's from John Piper. Maybe you do or don't agree with it, but he says, God is most glorified in us when we're most satisfied in him.

Maybe you don't see how God's glory and our satisfaction fit into this verse. But if we desire to exalt the name of God, to sing praises to his name and to bring glory to him, we do so by being fully satisfied.

In his presence. Right? Reflecting on God's past refuge and his sustaining shelter, his eternal glory, we find joy in his presence.

We cannot be alone or distant when we, rather, come into the presence of God. If you look at 1 Kings chapter eight, you can see the story of when God's presence filled the temple.

[ 29 : 43 ] His presence filled the temple, which is also the temple of our lives, so that we can't stand to minister before him.

Dwelling in God's presence, we cannot help but sing praises to him. Circling back to the verse, David said, so will I ever sing praises to your name.

I think sometimes we skip over this word praise as if we have a deep understanding of it. And maybe you do. But I think it's an interesting word. I think C.S. Lewis painted one of the most beautiful pictures of this idea of praise.

And he said that praise is within our nature, right? It's natural for us to sing praise. We do it every day. Sometimes that may be when we're watching one of our favorite stars or musicians or athletes do what they do best.

And when they score or when they do an awesome job, we overflow in praise. We may give applause. We may yell, right?



[ 30 : 57 ] Maybe you've seen this before. I used to live near a football stadium in Arkansas. And I lived over a mile from the stadium. And when our team scored, I could hear praises from my house.

I've even heard entire cities praising their sports team, right? I don't know why I'm crying about this, but getting there.

I think it was interesting just the other day when Spain played Italy in the Euro Cup. I probably have that wrong, but Spain played Italy, and we could hear through this whole city, probably the whole country, people praising Spain until they lost.

And then the whole city was silent for the rest of the night. Right? It's within our nature to praise. Sorry.

But I think the same is true of our praise to God. It is our nature to praise Him because we overflow with enjoyment and satisfaction in His presence.

[ 32 : 16 ] That's praise. C.S. Lewis said, praise is the overflow, the consummation of our joy in God.

And so we, like David, sing praises to His name forever. Right? That is the overflow of being in His presence.

He also says that He will perform His vows day after day. And so there's something in addition to His praise.

And that is that His praise is not empty words lifted high. It's words which produce something in Him. Right? He performs His vows day after day.

He does before God what He vowed to do before God. I want to look at four ways in Scripture where we continue to perform our vows.

[ 33 : 18 ] And I apologize for the long cross-references in this section, but I want you to see in the Scripture where they come from. And there's only four of them. Not too bad. But the first one is in Hebrews 13, verses 15 through 16.

The author says, Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. One way we perform our vows is to acknowledge His name and to do good in His name.

Another place we find this truth is in the words of Jesus in John chapter 15, verses 9 through 11. Jesus says, As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.

Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love, these things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.

[ 34 : 27 ] The fullness of joy overflows in praise. Third place we may find this in Scripture is Psalm 65, verses 1 through 4. I think Brent preached on this psalm a couple weeks ago.

But looking at these first four verses, David says, Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed. O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come.

When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgression. Blessed is the one you choose and bring near to dwell in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple.

We keep our vows by being satisfied in His goodness, by being satisfied in His holiness. And finally, in Psalm 50, verses 14 and 15.

David says, Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and perform your vows to the Most High. Call upon Him in the day of trouble. He will deliver you and you will glorify Him.



[ 35 : 38 ] We keep our vows by calling on Him for salvation. And in so, we bring Him glory. The beautiful truth of God's grace, the reality is that He delights to save us.

Even at the ends of the earth, when we call upon Him, He delights to save us. No matter how isolated you are, however alone you feel, no matter the battle that you're facing or the pains that you experience, He's waiting for you to call upon His name.

He's waiting. Cry out to Him for deliverance. Find joy in Him. Be satisfied in His presence and sing praises to His name that He might receive glory.

Amen. Before I conclude, I want to offer this for anyone here who maybe hasn't experienced God's nearness, who doesn't know His saving grace, who doesn't know the joy of His salvation, and doesn't have a life filled with praise for Him.

We often come before God broken by sinfulness and the reality that we've been disobedient and led astray. We've been slaves to the various passions of this flesh.

[ 37 : 00 ] And so we sense a void of separation between ourself and God. But in Titus 3, we read, and I'm paraphrasing here, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He offered salvation, not because of works we had done in righteousness, but He offered salvation according to His own mercy.

He offered the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. He poured out richly on us through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

He called us to repent of our sinfulness and to believe in the name of Jesus, to trust in His name that through Him we're justified and our sins are atoned for, paid for in Him as a free gift.

And so by having faith in His completed works and the fulfillment of God's promises, we become heirs according to hope of eternal life. And so no matter how far you feel from God, no matter how guilty you feel for your sin, all you must do is cry out for His mercy and trust that He hears you.

there's nothing more you need to do, nothing more you can do to repay God for your sin. The only payment He will accept is Christ's blood.

[ 38 : 19 ] If you have faith in His works, your sins are covered by the blood of Christ. You become a child of God and He embraces you as a child. He covers you in His wings and He upholds your life.

If you don't know Him, I pray that you would come forward, speak with myself, Pastor Brent, Pastor Les, Peter, please come see one of us and we will walk with you in praying out to the Lord.

I don't want to leave behind those of you who may feel at this time in your life closer to God than you ever have. Maybe you're dwelling richly in this moment in His presence. And so I don't want this message to pass you by.

If that's where you are right now, then I want to encourage you. Remember that we're called to draw near to God with hearts of full assurance of faith.

We're called not to neglect gathering together, but to encourage one another. Right? We're not only to receive the nearness of God, we are to help others find nearness with God.

[ 39 : 30 ] So in your day, here in the church, throughout your week, let your overflow of praise help someone else experience an overflow of praise.

In conclusion, I want to offer a couple practical ways. If you are really feeling stuck in a cycle of depression, anxiety, loneliness, far from God, I want to offer a few ways that you can draw near to him.



Kind of an aside and a little bit of a joke. Last week, I visited my family in Arkansas, and my mom is a very strong Christian believer who has encouraged me for many years, but I said it was a joke and now I'm crying.

She had this note on her fridge that said, choose joy. Any of you guys ever seen one of those before?

Right? And I always love to spark up debate, so instead of enjoying it, I responded, joy is not a choice, it's a command. Right?

[ 40 : 41 ] Which led to some fun discussion. But obviously, if joy is a command of Scripture, then it must be a choice, and a choice that we must make. Right?

We find this command in Philippians 4.4 and 1 Thessalonians 5.16. In both cases, when we're commanded to rejoice always, it's followed with the imperatives, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances.

And it says, these are the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Prayer and praise. The point is this, prayer draws us into the presence of God, to be near Him, to abide in His love, to dwell in His presence, and to know the fullness of joy, which inevitably overflows in thanksgiving and praise.

And just a few ways that you can draw near to Him. First, cry out to Him. lift your prayer to Him and commune with Him. Meditate on His past goodness.

Trust that He is your refuge, your high tower, and that you can find shelter under His wings. Meditate on the truths of God found throughout Scripture. Meditate on the love He's shown you through the gospel.

[ 42 : 05 ] Meditate on the promise of eternity. Dwell in His presence and be filled with His joy. Let your joy overflow into praise and perform your vows before Him day after day.

I don't think anyone this summer is scheduled to preach Psalm 63, 1 through 11, but it's a parallel passage to this psalm. And so I want to end by just reading these words of David.

If you don't know what to pray, if you feel distant from God, pray these words. O God, You are my God.

Earnestly I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My flesh faints for You as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon You in Your sanctuary, beholding Your power and Your glory because Your steadfast love is better than life.

my lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live. Your name I will lift up. In Your name I will lift up my hands.

[ 43 : 17 ] My soul will be satisfied with the fat and rich food. And my mouth will praise You with joyful lips when I remember You upon my bed and meditate on You in the watches of the night.

For You have been my help and in the shadow of Your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to You. Your right hand upholds my life.

But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth. They shall be given over to the power of the sword. They shall be a portion for jackals, but the king shall rejoice in God.

All who swear by Him shall exalt for the mouths of liars will be stopped. Whatever lies you've been believing about your sin, your shame, your guilt, your anxiety, your loneliness, you can, in this moment, rejoice in God.

The mouths of liars will be stopped. All who seek to destroy your life will be broken. He is your refuge, your strong tower, your dwelling place. You can sing for joy even amidst your darkest night.



[ 44 : 34 ] You can meditate on His word and trust in His spirit. Trust that it's there with you. And you can trust that His right hand upholds you.

If you look at Isaiah 48, 13, you'll see that His right hand spread out the heavens and it upholds you.

Let's pray.