

Sermon on **Psalm 62** for 3rd Weekend after the Epiphany
St. Paul's Lutheran – Pastor N. Scharf – January 27-29

You don't have to answer out loud, but just think about who or what comes to mind. Who would you call for help on home repairs? Who would you call for help on car repairs? What would you reach for when you have a headache? Who would you call for help on your heart repairs? There is probably a person or a company you can think of to call. Today, King David from 1000 B.C., an immensely talented man with great power, resources, and influence gives us a striking confession and exhortation about where he and we find true rest and refuge no matter what trouble we come across. He teaches us a refrain to sing and live for life:

My soul finds rest in God alone.

- 1) A refrain that is a Refuge from all the enemies that encircle us.**
- 2) A refrain that is worth more than all the things of this world.**

Here is David's refrain: *"Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken."* David wrote this beautiful confession and refrain, one that will repeat in this psalm, and one he came back to regularly in life and you see throughout his youth and even to old age. You hear it in Psalm 22 with prophetic words about the coming Savior and his sacrifice for us, in Psalm 23 that we have safety in the shepherding of the Good Shepherd start to finish. David learned this refrain well, no doubt because he had trouble and trials so very often alongside blessings! Some have said the lessons we learn the hard way we learn better and more deeply. This song was sung in the tabernacle and temple.

Life following God is not easy. David speaks to and about those who would throw him down, *"How long will you assault me? Would all of you throw me down – this leaning wall, this tottering fence? Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place; they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse."* From his youth when he heard the taunts of Goliath against Israel, against him, and against the LORD God, to the time when King Saul was jealous of him and tried to kill him and hunt him down, to the time when his own son Absalom tried to take his throne, and his relative and trusted right hand man army commander Joab betrayed him in the rebellion. David knew what it was like to be pursued by blood-thirsty and high-powered enemies. David also knew the terrors of a guilty conscience, and the accusations of the devil against a believer caught in sin. David even said his bones ached within him because of the guilt and shame and terror of God's punishment (Psalm 32). It's not easy.

What about you? Do you find situations in life where people seem to be lined up against you – sometimes through no fault of your own, but sometimes it's merited? Do you find people speak behind your back, even plot against you? Do you feel like a *tottering fence* and a *leaning wall* that just one more push and you'll be down and out? Are you struggling not against flesh and blood, but against a guilty conscience, a mind that seems to betray you, intrusive and unwelcomed thoughts, feeling that you will be overwhelmed? Or maybe things would be better if you weren't here? These are awful, unwelcomed thoughts. Where do we go?

David no doubt knew and used the resources God had given him. David had riches, advisors, musicians, influence, a family, an army, his own strength and wisdom which he employed mostly for the good, but sometimes in sin and weakness.

What are your resources? In my employ there are lots of things that can help - shoes for exercise, the right foods, light for the gloomy days, friends, godly people around me, vitamins to help boost, prescription drugs as necessary in the right amount to handle the lows, comforts and gifts of God in this life, but like David they can be misused – improper use of drugs is sin. Alcohol can be a blessing for enjoyment, but too much and drunkenness is a sin, even in Minnesota, and I have to remember that and you have to remember that as children of God. But many of these things taken in the right measure, utilized, can help, most of the time, some of the time, but they still haven't reached the heart of it – true **refuge from all the enemies that encircle us.**

David found there was only one real place to find true rest no matter whether it was physical, spiritual, soul wrenching in all the triumphs and trials – Learn his refrain – **My soul finds rest in God alone.** *"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken."* In God and all God did for him, he had salvation. God saved him time and again – from the threatening giant, from the angry king, time after time in battle, and from a rebellious son and betraying general, and from far more than any physical danger, God saved his soul, forgave his many sins – sending the prophet Nathan to confront him bringing him to repentance and then to forgive him. God promised him a Savior. David had certain hope no matter what assailed him. He was **not**

shaken. This God is yours too. This is **a refrain that is a refuge from all the enemies that encircle us. A refrain that is worth more than all the things of this world.**

"My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge." In an emphatic mountain top middle verse, David declares these words, *"My salvation and my honor depend on God."* Recognize it too. Trust in God and in the Savior he sends. David exhorts us, *"Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."* He is a refuge in the storms of this life. He is your hope for tomorrow and your strength for today. He is the *mighty rock* on which you can stand and build your life.

David knew this wasn't easy to keep focused on. He knew that when things are real bad or even when they are real good we can lose sight of this and put our hope in the things we can see or feel. David knew the temptations. So David warns us.

"Surely the lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie. If weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath. Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them." Some of David's greatest triumphs were followed by his greatest falls of pride or lust or putting love for others and self above love for God, even resorting to treachery. What people seem in the eyes of man does not matter before God, and can be deceiving to us. Even when God gives us everything we hoped and prayed for, it's not for us to worship the gifts rather than the giver.

Is this a temptation for us? Has a fear of boredom and the good gift of riches tempted us into some love of busyness and opportunities that we run after, which may be good things, but have taken up all our time and then demand more and God's Word and singing and living this refrain take a back seat. Do things distract us? Each day is a day of repentance. God forgive us and help us keep you first in our lives. Help us sing this refrain and live it!

David helps us, *"One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: 'Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love'; and 'You reward everyone according to what they have done.'"* God is all powerful. David saw it in the victories God gave him, in raising a lowly shepherd boy to the throne of Israel. David saw it in the promises God gave him not only for his lifetime, but to follow after him, that the King of kings would be descended from him and sit on the throne not to rule over a patch of dirt, but to rule in our hearts and over all the earth. But he knew God shows his greatest strength in his *unfailing love*. God delivered on the promise to send the King of Kings, descended from David. His name is Jesus Christ.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. He knew the Scriptures and as he went each week to the synagogue – not a bad priority for us either – he heard and sang the Scriptures, the psalms. And if he sang Psalm 62, how beautifully it was fulfilled by and in him. He lived it perfectly – God's *power* and *unfailing love*. He displayed God's awesome power in his baptism, miracles, in his transfiguration, in his teaching with authority. But be careful of what you see, because he humbled himself to be betrayed and deserted while his enemies surrounded him. They even put him on a cross. Before he died he said in trust and rest in his Father, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,"* living the refrain.

Was it worth it? Was his trust misplaced? What comfort or relief was there for Jesus as he suffered hell for us and then hung his head and died? Was it misplaced trust? The men with Jesus fled in fear and hid. A good reminder for us when the money seems to be running out, or the friends fail, or the thoughts invade, and we are brought low, where do we look? Look to Jesus and sing this refrain. **Truly My soul finds rest in God alone.** It was worth it. God raised him from the dead. That means your sins have been paid for and you are forgiven. That means "when every earthly prop gives way he then is all my hope and stay." (My Hope is Built On Nothing Less CW 564). You have Jesus and he will bring you home to heaven. We have peace with God. Live this refrain. And know God never gets it wrong.

"You reward everyone according to what they have done." This is not a recipe for works-righteousness, as though we earned anything from God. David clearly stated *our salvation is in him*. We are saved by grace. But what a comfort to know that in his grace, God rewards his people. In his love he follows us and knows what we go through, the struggles we have, the things we give up or go through as we *"deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow"* Jesus (Matt 16:24). Forgiven and freed live, suffer, thrive and sing this refrain till Jesus calls you home: **My soul finds rest in God alone.** In Jesus' name. Amen.