



Calvary Presbyterian Church
Sunday, JULY 2, 2023

Beautiful Strength:
Reflections on Psalm 89
Rev. Eyde Mabanglo

SCRIPTURE:

PSALM 89:1-4, 15-18 (The Voice Translation)

I will sing of Your unfailing love, Eternal One, forever.

I will speak of Your faithfulness to all generations.

²*I will tell how Your unfailing love will always stand strong;
and how Your faithfulness is established in the heavens above.*

³*You said, "I have made a covenant with My chosen one.*

I made My servant, David, this promise:

⁴*I will establish your dynasty*

so that you and your descendants will always be secure.

Your rule will continue for generations to come."

¹⁵*How happy are those who have learned how to praise You;
those who journey through life by the light of Your face.*

¹⁶*Every hour of the day, they rejoice at the sound of Your name
They are lifted up and encouraged by Your righteousness.*

¹⁷*For You are the beauty of their strength.*

On account of Your favor, our strength, our horn, is increased.

¹⁸*For our shield of protection comes from the Eternal,
and the Holy One of Israel has given us our king.*

SERMON

What is the origin of "Christmas in July"?

Apparently, it was a camp theme in North Carolina in the 1930's.

It was a Movie in the 1940's.

Then, retailers used it to boost sales...and then

The Hallmark Channel has exploited the idea beyond measure.

Over 300 titles of Christmas movies and they are playing today...beginning at 10am.

I've tried to research the FORMULA of a typical Christmas movie on the Hallmark channel:

Each Hallmark Christmas movie follows the same rigid nine-act structure. "You have to start with two people who, for whatever reason, don't like each other, and you're just maneuvering through those nine acts to get them to that kiss in the snow."

From Hate to Love in Nine Heart-Warming Acts

Look closely, and you'll see the formula is borne out, even down to the dominant personality traits of the protagonist. She is often a cute, career-driven woman with an unfulfilled dream. Throughout the movie, she goes on a journey to fulfill that dream with the help of an unlikely love interest. Without fail, the love interest is always a nice man, and there is a romantic spark, but something prevents them from getting together.

Somewhere in the first act, before the first commercial break, there must be an almost kiss that is somehow broken up. A current boyfriend or girlfriend or other distraction is keeping the couple apart. Around the halfway point, a Christmas-themed conflict arises, but nothing too emotionally devastating. By the end, the couple shares a single kiss amidst snow flurries or under the mistletoe as the theme music swells and credits roll.

And the non-negotiable rule above all rules? There better be snow. According to the writers, "The first rule is snow. We really wanted to do one where the basic conflict was a fear that there would not be snow on Christmas. We were told you cannot do that, there must be snow. They can't wait for the snow, there must be snow. You cannot threaten them with no snow."

The sentiment of those needing to see snow in a Christmas movie or longing to see a repaired relationship in nine acts or the predictable nature of a familiar story all seems to help us better understand Psalm 89...

"The first rule is Davidic King. We really wanted to do one where the basic conflict was a fear that there will not be a Davidic King. We were told you cannot do that, there must be a King. They can't be waiting for the King, there has to be a King from the Line of David. You cannot threaten them with no King."

CONTEXT of PSALM 89

Psalm 89 written by "Ethan" on behalf of David.

Like many psalms, Psalm 89 acknowledges and praises Hesed—that is the loving kindness and faithfulness of God...and the promises of God.

The Promise of the reign of David with God. God and King—God and David are to lead the created order together. God ensures the endurance of David's throne and the flourishing of the whole world. God made a promise. He loves David and we know God is faithful. David's throne stands forever. So, all is right with the world.

But when David's throne and kingdom is destroyed by the Babylonians in 587, there is upheaval and chaos, the psalm ends with questions about the state of the world, questions about God's faithfulness...questions that can still cause great confusion for many of us when we ask, like Psalm 89, where is God?

There is great confusion. Why is God absent or silent?

Psalm 89 is a psalm of lament...what about God's Promise for the Davidic Line?

The last psalm in the third book of psalms, psalm 89 marks the shattering of the world (the crisis in 587) of which the entire psalter is an effort to respond to...

God remains King even after David's rule is over...and David's voice appears again in the psalms not as a king but as a cantor...he no longer leads the army but leads God's people in praise God as King.

The entire psalter is meant to help us deal with trauma, answer the deeper problems of life, encourage us, teach us humility and patience in all things. All the psalms together give us hope in God—who is, was, and will be King.

"The first rule is Davidic King. We really wanted to do one where the basic conflict was a fear that there will not be a Davidic King. We were told you cannot do that, there must be a King. They can't be waiting for the King, there has to be a King from the Line of David. You cannot threaten them with no King."

The long-awaited answer to Psalm 89 IS CHRISTMAS IN JULY!

The Davidic king who was elected and rejected endures NOW in Christ Jesus, who himself was rejected unto death to rise on the third day. Thus, the church is invited to sing psalm 89 as it begins:

*I will sing of Your unfailing love, Eternal One, forever.
I will speak of Your faithfulness to all generations.*

Our Advent and Christmas songs answer the cries of lament in Psalm 89

Lo, how a rose er blooming

*Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
As men of old have sung.
It came, a flower bright, Amid the cold of winter
When half-gone was the night.*

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The Rose I have in mind:
With Mary we behold it,
The virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright She bore to men a Savior
When half-gone was the night.*

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

*O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.*

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

*O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave. Refrain*

*O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to death's abode. Refrain*

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

*Come, thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee
Israel's Strength and Consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart*

*Born Thy people to deliver
Born a child and yet a King
Born to reign in us forever
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit
Raise us to Thy glorious throne*

And the lament of Psalm 89 is answered in the songs of the Christmas story as told by LUKE in Chapters 1 and 2.

Mary's Song

"My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

Zechariah's Song

⁶⁸*"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,*

because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹*He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David*

⁷⁰*(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),*

⁷¹*salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—*

⁷²*to show mercy to our ancestors*

and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

"Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

Our summer sermon series is Spirit Tastings—the exquisite pairings of heaven and earth in the psalms. Today's psalm is a pivotal song not by David, but about God's promises to David and about David...to us and about us...

Even amid anguish, grief, confusion, and longing, the psalms always bring us back to the steadfast faithfulness and loving kindness of our God. A promise of God is eternal. It is a bond that cannot be broken. God always was, is and will be. So, God always loved, loves and will love us.

No matter your situation, your circumstance, your chaos, or your deepest longings, God will be with you. There may not be snow for our Christmas in July, but Christ Jesus will always be our King, our Savior, our Lord.

CONCLUSION

I feel a Christmas Song coming along...

O Come Let us Adore Him

O Come Let us Adore Him

O Come Let us Adore Him

Christ the Lord

May it be so. May it be so.

