A Monday Morning Psalm

Psalm 22:1, 22-24
1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
23 Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

Monday Morning
Many of the psalms are preceded in their original Hebrew form
• by a superscription that gives some understanding
  o to the setting and circumstances of the Psalm.
• The superscription for Psalm 22
  o is complex and difficult to translate.
• The KJV of the bible offers only a partial translation
  o of the superscription,
    ▪ which brands the Psalm as
      • “The Deer of The Dawn.”
    o What a cryptic title.
      ▪ It conveys both the image of a deer,
        • that noble king of the forest
          o who is regal and elegant
        • and the transition between
          o night and day.
      o It is almost as if the Deer is emerging
        ▪ from the darkness of night
        • and stepping into
          o the dawn of a new day.
• The Greek Translation of the Old Testament,
  o which is the biblical text that the Apostle Paul
    ▪ read and preached from,
  o offers a lengthier translation of the superscription
    ▪ which labels the Psalm as being
      • “The source of David's aid, or help,
          o on the first day of the week.”
• In other words, Psalm 22 was David's Monday Morning Psalm.
  o It was the song he sung
    ▪ or the words he read
      • for strength and encouragement
Talk about the perfect Psalm for a Monday morning,
• it begins with these words:
  o “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
• You might recognize those tragic words.
  o That is the cry of Golgotha,
    ▪ the piercing cry of the savior
    ▪ as he hung upon the cross.
• There is no greater image of abandonment
  o than Jesus Christ,
    ▪ the spotless lamb of God,
    ▪ hanging upon the cross,
    ▪ bearing the sins of the entire world,
      o with the guilt and the shame
      o of all of humanity upon his shoulders,
    ▪ lifting his voice
      ▪ in solidarity with the human condition
        o and crying out,
          ▪ “Why hast thou forsaken me?”
• There is a depth of despair
  o and abandonment in those words
    ▪ that goes far beyond
      ▪ the normal Monday morning.
• I understand that we all despise Mondays.
  o No one wants to get up
    ▪ and start the week off
      ▪ by going to work
        o or to school.
• But there is something much deeper
  o in the Monday Morning Psalm
    ▪ than just a desire
      ▪ to shirk our responsibilities
        o for one more day.
• There is a sense of anguish,
  o pain and heartache
    ▪ that is contained
      ▪ within those words.
• There is a bitterness and hurt
  o Conveyed in the words of that Psalm
    ▪ that really cannot be contained
      ▪ in a single Monday morning.
        o It is a cry of misery
        o and hopelessness.
The Winter Of The Soul
If we were honest with each other tonight, we’ve all been in that place before.

- It is the place that one author called
  - “The winter of the Soul.”
    - It is much more than just a Monday morning.
      - It is a season of life.

- If there is anything that I know about seasons,
  - they are cyclical
    - and they are as certain
      - as the rising and setting of the sun.

- Seasons change.
  - You can’t hold onto them.
    - You can’t stop the hands of time.
  - The spring,
    - with its cool mornings
      - and gentle breeze,
  - will always give way to the summer
    - with its ferocious heat
      - and suffocating humidity.
  - And though the summer
    - can be an uncomfortable season,
  - you can rest assured
    - that the dog days of summer
      - are a sure sign the autumn is on its way.

- I love the fall of the year.
  - If I could freeze time in a particular season,
    - for me it would be autumn.
  - I could live perpetually
    - in the crisp cool mornings,
      - the comfortable afternoons,
      - and the brilliant colors of the forest.
  - But even as the season changes,
    - it brings with it
      - the dreadful awareness
        - that winter is coming.

Winter is a difficult season.

- The days are short
  - and the night is long
    - and both day and night
      - are filled with a bitter cold.

- It is the only season of the year
  - where I leave for work in the morning
    - with my headlights on
  - and drive home in the evening
• with my headlights on.
  o There is something fundamentally wrong with that!
• There is a sense of isolation
  o and solitude in the winter,
    ▪ a feeling of abandonment.
  o There is no standing around in the yard
    ▪ chatting with the neighbors.
  o Who wants to go out in the cold?
    ▪ Or brave the “black ice” when you don’t have to?
  o **Winter seems to cut you off from everyone else.**
• Its almost as if all of the joy
  o has been sucked out of life
    ▪ by the cold icy fingers of winter.
• The chill of the north wind
  o seems to generate feelings
    ▪ of loneliness,
    ▪ despair
    ▪ and even depression.

When we talk about the winter of the soul
• we aren’t just talking
  o about a Monday morning,
• we are talking about a continuous,
  o unbroken procession
    ▪ of Monday mornings.
• It is a season of life
  o where everything that can go wrong does.
• It is that season of crushing isolation,
  o that time of bitter disappointments,
    ▪ a string of complete and total failures
      • where everything
        o that you can count on fails
      • and everyone
        o that you depend on abandons you
      • and every resource
        o that you have runs dry.
• It is that bitter,
  o cold,
  o dark,
  o lonely season of the soul
    ▪ that can only be described as winter.
• There’s more death there than life,
  o more dying than living,
    ▪ more pain than comfort,
    • more sorrow than joy.
It is one of the most challenging seasons of this life.

**Job**

If there was ever a book in the Bible
- that dealt with the Winter of the Soul,
  - it is the book of Job.
- That book opens with Job living in the land of Uz.
  - Job is a righteous man.
    - He is a servant of God
      - who honors God
      - in everything he does.
- He is a tremendously blessed man
  - because of his relationship with God.
- But six verses into the book,
  - everything changes.
- There was a day when the Son’s of God
  - came to present themselves before the Lord,
    - and Satan came also among them.
      - *That sounds a lot like a Monday morning.*
- In the exchange that follows,
  - Satan challenges God
    - about Job’s righteousness.
- Essentially, Satan calls Job’s motivation
  - for serving God into question.
- He accused Job of loving God
  - the same way that little children love Santa Clause.
  - **He told God, if you turn off**
    - the fountains of blessing in Job’s life,
      - he will turn his back on you.
- What follows that exchange is a living testimony,
  - a real life parable of sorts,
    - where God allows Satan to test
      - the depth of Job’s devotion to God.
  - **Job is, unwittingly, thrust**
    - into the winter of the soul.

First Job loses all of his possessions, all of his wealth;
- everything that he has of any material value
  - is taken from him
    - in a continual procession of tragedy.
- Then, as if it isn’t enough to lose
  - everything of any earthly value,
    - Job loses all of his children.
- The thing about Job is that,
  - even in those devastating circumstances,
he worshiped God.

- Through all of the tragedy that he endured,
  - he never faltered in his devotion to God.
- So Satan returns to and says
  - that a man values his life above all else.
- He challenges God
  - to lift the hedge of protection
    - that shelters Job’s physical body
    - from the touch of Satan.
- Once again, God consents
  - and Job’s body is plagued with boils
    - from his head to the soles of his feet.
- Now Job is absolutely miserable.
  - He has lost everything,
    - including his children,
      - and now he loses his health.
  - Even his wife tells him
    - to curse God and die!
- Talk about the winter of the soul,
  - the season that Job was going through
    - was as bitter,
      - cold,
      - lonely
      - and hopeless
    - as it could possibly be.

A lot of people think that the purpose of the book of Job

- is to ask the question,
  - “Where is God when we suffer?”
    - “Where is God when we go through
      - the winter of the soul?”
- But that’s not really the question
  - that the book attempts to answer at all.
- The key question in the book of Job
  - was asked by Satan in Job 1:9,
    - “Does Job fear God for nothing?”
- The word for fear has to do
  - with reverence and respect,
    - not terror.
- The question that is really being asked here is
  - “Does Job worship God for nothing?”
- To put it in the terms that Satan was presenting to God,
  - “Is Job’s devotion to you based
    - on the blessings he gets from you?”
- What if you stopped blessing him,
o what if you took away all of your blessings,  
  ▪ what if he was forced into the winter of the soul?

• Is there any benefit from worshiping God  
  o when there is no tangible blessing in return?

• Is there any benefit in worshiping God  
  o when there is no answer to your prayer?  
    ▪ When the sickness doesn’t go away?  
    ▪ When the financial blessing doesn’t happen?  
    ▪ When the miracle never materializes?  
  o Can Job worship God when there is “nothing”?

The Benefit
Job is the unwitting participant  
• in a dynamic demonstration  
• of the benefit of serving God  
  ▪ when there seems to be  
  ▪ no measurable advantage  
    ▪ to worshiping God.

• If you read the book of Job,  
  o you will discover  
    ▪ that it finally becomes more  
      ▪ than Job can bear in silence  
        o and though he never sins,  
        o and he never ceases to worship God,  
      ▪ he does erupt in a cry of anguish,  
        o much like the cry that begins the 22nd Psalm.
  ▪ Frustration,  
    ▪ bitterness,  
    ▪ hurt  
    ▪ and confusion  
      o finally come tumbling out  
      o in his words to God.

• Job challenges God in the 23rd Chapter:  
  o “Oh that I knew where I might find him,  
    ▪ that I might come even before his seat!  
  o I would present my case before him  
    ▪ and fill my mouth with arguments.”

• Job has cried out to God  
  o from the bottom of his heart,  
    ▪ in his anguish and despair.  
  o He just wants to know “Why?”

• If you would allow me to paraphrase  
  o the whole book  
    ▪ and wrap it up into one phrase  
      ▪ that sums up Job’s cry,
A Monday Morning Psalm

Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

It would be opening phrase of Psalm 22:
- “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
- Why?

If we were honest with each other,
- we have all felt that way from time to time.
  - We’ve all been in that desperate place
    - Where nothing makes any sense any more.
  - We’ve all thrown our hands in the air
    - And cried out to God – “Why?”

Finally in chapter 38 the Lord answers Job out of a whirlwind.
- But even then,
  - God doesn’t seem to answer the question directly.
- As a matter of fact,
  - God never answers the question,
    - he never tells Job why
      - he had to go through
        - what he went through.
  - Job’s experience,
    - like the experience of Jesus on the cross,
      - is indicative of the human condition.
  - God doesn’t owe us an explanation.
    - God doesn’t owe us a sense of understanding.
      - And he doesn’t give that clarity to Job.
- Why?
  - Because the fundamental question here is not “Why?”
    - The fundamental question has to do
      - the benefit of serving God
        - when there are no benefits.

It is easy to serve God, when you know “Why?”
- It’s easy to worship God through the storm
  - when you have a sense of understanding
    - about why you are going through the storm.
- The whole purpose of the trial
  - was to see if Job would continue
    - to worship God
      - when he didn’t know “Why?”
  - Would he continue to serve God
    - when there was no discernable benefit
      - from doing so.
  - Could Job worship God for “nothing”?
    - When there was “nothing”?

Instead of telling Job “why”,
• God proceeded to reveal
  o his character to Job.
• He asks him
  o “Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain,
    ▪ a path for the thunderstorm,
  o to water a land where no one lives,
    ▪ and uninhabited desert,
    ▪ to satisfy a desolate wasteland,
      • make the wasteland sprout with grass?”
• Now I’m sure the poetic symmetry of that
  o was much more obvious in Hebrew,
    ▪ but the point that God was making
      • was very obvious to Job.
• Job lived in a climate
  o where life depended on rainfall.
    ▪ He lived in a dry and thirsty land,
      • where water was a precious commodity.
• The important thing here
  o is that they would never waste water.
    ▪ So God asks Job,
      • why would God water a land
      • where nobody lives?
• Why would God waste that precious,
  o life-giving rainfall
    ▪ on a desolate desert land
      • where nobody would benefit from it?
  o Why would God pour out his blessings
    ▪ where there was no one
      • to give him thanks for it?
  • The question serves to emphasize the goodness of God.
    o God is good all the time.
      ▪ Whether men praise his goodness or not, God is good!
• He gives and he blesses,
  o just because he enjoys
    ▪ giving and blessing.
  o He even pours out his blessings
    ▪ on a land where no one is available
      • to appreciate,
      • or even thank him,
        ▪ for the blessing.

**Seasons Change**
Job wants to know,
• Why would God allow
the winter season,
  • a season of tragedy and trial,
    • to grip the life of a faithful servant?
• Essentially, he wants to know,
  • "Why would God allow bad things to happen to a good person?"
• God’s response is simple:
  • He allows good things to happen
    • to a land where there isn't even anyone there
      • to thank him for it.
• Contained within the mystic poetry of the book of Job,
  • nestled amongst the behemoths, wild goats and leviathans,
    • there is a subtle but powerful truth
  • that the blessings of God
    • are not tied to our faithfulness to God.
      • Good things happen to bad people.
      • It rains on the just and unjust alike.
      • All people are subject to time and circumstance
      • and every person goes through the seasons of life.
• That's the point of the book of Job.
  • Every man woman and child who ever lives
    • will endure the cyclical nature of life.
      • We all go through seasons.
      • We all experience the ups and downs,
        • the good times and bad.
• Tragedy and triumph come hand in hand.
  • Good times and bad
    • make up the fabric of our life.
  • Where there is a spring there will be a summer.
  • Where there is an autumn, there will be a winter.
    • It is as certain as the rising of the sun.

The lesson that Job is to learn,
• and the lesson that we each need to grasp, is that
  • the ultimate benefit of worshiping God
    • does not reside in the benefits that we get from God.
• The benefit of serving God is God.
  • Alone.
  • All by himself.
    • He is our strength.
    • He is our joy.
    • He is our constant friend
      • In times of trouble.
    • He is our help,
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• our way maker,
• our sense of confidence and peace.
  o But when there is nothing,
    ▪ When no answer comes from heaven
    ▪ When there is no discernable advantage to worshiping him
  o He is enough, all by himself!
• When we don’t know where to turn or what to do next,
  o When we have more questions than we have answers
  o When it seems as if the heavens are brass
  o And the blessings of God have abandoned us

  • When the cold wind of winter
    o blows across our souls,
    ▪ he is our God
    • and that is enough!

This is the message I want you to grasp this evening.
• God is enough.
  o In the barren winter of the soul, He is enough.
• When you go through the winter season of the soul,
  o when you find yourself in that place
  o where there are no easy answers
    ▪ and it seems as if God has ignored your cry for help,

• Remember this:
  o Winter is a season
    ▪ and the wonderful thing about seasons
    ▪ is that they change.
• The icy wind of winter may usher in unimaginable trouble
  o and despair in your life
    ▪ but by its very existence
    ▪ it testifies of the fact
      ▪ that the season is going to change,
      ▪ spring is coming.
• That’s not to say that the winter isn’t difficult,
  o that’s not to say that the winter doesn’t try your soul,
    ▪ but somebody needs to know
    ▪ that the seasons of life are never permanent.

• Keep on trusting God.
  o keep on walking with him,
  o keep your confidence in the Lord,
    ▪ even when there are no discernable benefits
  o Because sooner or later the season is going to change.

• Weeping, the scripture says, endures for a season,
  o but Joy comes in the morning.
• I want somebody to know this evening
that if you will hang in there,
- it may be winter now, but Joy is coming!

From Anguish to Worship
Eventually Job’s suffering ended, and God’s blessings returned.

- But Job never got any explanation from God,
  - he never had the benefit of understanding why.
- He also never faltered in his faith
  - that God was going to take care of him.
- In the end, Job would testify,
  - in the last chapter of the book
  - that through it all,
    - through the pain and the suffering,
  - through the terrible winter of the soul,
    - he caught a glimpse of the majesty of God.
- Job saw God in the middle of his winter.
  - When the blessings were gone,
    - when the benefits were stripped away,
    - when there was nothing left but haunting questions
      - and unwavering faith,
        - that is when Job saw God.
  - He said, before this I had only heard of you,
    - before this I only knew what I had read
      - or what others had told me,
  - but now my eyes have seen
    - the glory of the Lord.
- I want to tell you this evening,
  - that there’s something about
    - the winter of the soul
      - that clarifies our vision,
    - that causes us to become acutely aware of God.
- When there is no benefit to serving God,
  - that’s when we realize
    - that the true benefit is God,
      - all by himself.
- If he never does another good thing for us,
  - he is still worthy of our worship.

That’s the great thing about the Monday Morning Psalm,

- what begins as a cry of anguish,
  - ends as a song of praise.
- Monday morning begins
  - with the haunting feeling
    - that God has abandoned me
      - in the middle of my trial,
that I have been forsaken,
  • that God is far from helping me,
  • that he doesn’t hear me when I cry out to him.

**But the great thing about Monday**
  o is that it is not permanent.
• After twenty-one verses of gloom and despair,
  o the Monday Morning Psalm
    ▪ erupts into a song of praise.
    o “I will declare they name unto my brethren,”
      ▪ the Psalmist proclaims,
    o “In the midst of the congregation I will praise thee.”
• The psalmist goes on to say, in the 24th verse,
  o “For He hath not despised nor abhorred
    ▪ the afflictions of the afflicted,
    ▪ neither hath he hid his face from him,
    ▪ but when he cried unto Him, he heard.”

What a change takes place from verse 1 to verse 24.
• There is a remarkable turn of events.
  o Fear gives way to praise,
    ▪ tragedy turns into triumph,
    ▪ and despair becomes delight
• as the Psalmist recognizes
  o that the best thing about Monday morning
    ▪ is the fact that,
      • in few short hours,
      • it won’t be Monday any more!

Close

I have come to this pulpit this evening to encourage someone
• that the season
  o that you are going through in your life
    ▪ is not permanent.
• Seasons change.
  o None of us wants to go through
    ▪ the winter season of the soul,
  o none of us wants to endure the trying times
    ▪ where we question our very existence,
      • as Job did.
• None of us wants to endure another Monday Morning.
  o But something happens on Monday morning
    ▪ that cannot happen anywhere else,
  o something happens in the winter of the soul
    ▪ that doesn’t happen
under any other set of circumstances.

When the blessings are stripped away,

• when we are pushed out of our comfort zone
  o into the crucible of trial and trouble
• that is when we finally see the Lord
  o for who he really is.
• It’s easy to praise him when he is blessing you.
  o It’s easy to worship him
    ▪ when you are up on the mountain
    ▪ and everything is going right.
• But it is when you are down in the valley
  o When the darkness closes in
  o When the questions haunt your soul
  o When you can’t sleep at night
    ▪ Because you can’t find an answer
    ▪ To the thing that troubles you
      • That’s when you learn what it really is
      • To serve Him.
      • To worship Him.
      • To know Him.
    ▪ That’s when you see Him.
• The old songwriter said:
  o He is not just the Lord of our good times;
    ▪ he is lord of our bad times.
  o He is not just the God on the mountain;
    ▪ he is God in the valley.
  o When things go wrong,
    ▪ He’s the one who makes them right.
• You can’t learn that
  o Unless you go through the winter of the soul
• You can’t know that
  o Unless you’ve been in that place
  o Where you did not know where to turn
• You will never know how sweet it is to trust in Him
  o Until you first stand in the place
  o Where you have to trust in Him.
• You will never have the confidence
  o That you can walk by faith
  o And not by sight
• Until everything
  o That you can see
    ▪ is taken away
  o and you have to take
    ▪ Your next step by faith!
• That’s where we grow,
  o that’s where we learn,
    ▪ that’s where we see Jesus for who he really is.
  o When he doesn’t answer my prayer
    ▪ and I discover that his presence alone
    ▪ is answer enough to my prayer.
• When he doesn’t take away the storm,
  o And I discover that his presence alone
    ▪ is enough to calm my troubled soul.
• Somewhere in the middle of my anguish,
  o somewhere in the midst of my despair,
    ▪ I see Him!
• You know what happens when you see him?
  o A song of praise breaks forth.
    ▪ You can’t really see him
      • Without praising Him.
    ▪ You can’t really catch a glimpse of his glory
      • without worshiping Him.
• I understand tonight that some of you are in difficult places.
• I recognize that there are things that are going on that are beyond the scope of what I know
• But I want you to know in this place tonight that you serve a God that is more than enough all by himself.
• And I just believe this evening that there is an anointing of the Holy Ghost that is flowing through this place tonight that would turn your cry of anguish into a song of praise.
• Because that is what this season of your life is about.
• That is what the winter is about.
• It is about bringing you to the place where you worship him for nothing.
• Think about it.
• For nothing.
• When was the last time you worshipped him for nothing?
• So often our worship is linked to the blessings
  o We worship him because of what he has done
  o We worship him because of what we can see and understand
• When was the last time you worshiped him for nothing?
• Do you want ot know how you get through the winter of the soul?
  o You worship him when there is nothing.
  o When there is no other reason than just who he is.
  o When you stand in his presence and tell Him
    ▪ You are enough!
  o If I don’t get the financial miracle that I need
    ▪ You are enough!
  o If I don’t get the healing that I so desire
    ▪ You are enough!
o If I don’t get the clarity that I long for
  ▪ You are enough!
o If I don’t ever find out “Why?”
  ▪ You are enough!

• I know that it is an odd way to end a message on the Winter of the Soul.
  o But I believe that winter is all about worship
    ▪ and the question is will you worship him for nothing?

• Somebody needs to turn your cry of anguish into a song of praise.

• Somebody needs to peer through the gathering storm in your life and catch a
  glimpse of the glory of God.

• In the 28th verse, the Psalmist reminds himself,
  o the kingdom is the Lord’s
  o and he still sits on the throne.

• That is reason enough to praise him,
  o even in the winter of the soul!

• It is time to turn your sorrow in to joy,
  o to turn your despair into praise,
  o to turn the sorrow of the night
    ▪ into the rejoicing of morning.

• He’s still God and He still sits on the throne!