Lead Me To The Rock

Psalm 61:1-2
1 Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.
2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Jehoshaphat
- Jehoshaphat came to the throne of Judah
  - in the aftermath of a season of conflict.
- But he was a righteous king,
  - who turned his heart and his nation
    ▪ towards God.
- His reign began with a season of national repentance.
  - Jehoshaphat led his people away
    ▪ from the groves and high places
      • where false gods were worshipped
    ▪ and back to the law of God
      • as the true standard for life.
- This set the tone for his 25 year reign.
  - Judah was blessed during the time that he was their King.

- However, the reign of Jehoshaphat was not
  - without times of crisis and trouble.
- Some folks mistakenly get the idea
  - that if I serve God,
    ▪ or if I’m faithful to God,
  - I’ll never have to face crisis in my life
    ▪ but nothing could be further from the truth.
- The promise has never been
  - that God would remove you
    ▪ from the ebb and flow of life,
      • that the seasons would have
        ▪ no impact on you,
      • that trial and tragedy
        ▪ would never happen.
  - No. He promised that
    ▪ wherever you find yourself,
      • whatever you have to face,
        ▪ he will always be there with you.

- King Jehoshaphat faced his greatest crisis
  - in 2 Chronicles chapter 20.
    ▪ The Bible tells us that three nations joined together,
• forming a vast army,
  o and launched an invasion of Judah.

• Even worse than that,
  o Jehoshaphat never knew they were coming
    • until they were almost upon him.

• Scouts came racing to the king one day
  o with the dreadful news.
    • A massive army,
      • a great multitude
        o from beyond the sea,
      • has marched against you
        o and they are right now on your doorstep.

• The problem was that the enemy
  o was more and mightier
    • than any army that Jehoshaphat
      • could ever raise.
  o It was three nations against Judah.
    • And Judah was just a small portion
      • of the fragmented nation of Israel.
  o Composed of only 2 tribes,
    • she couldn't even field the army
      • that Israel could field,
    • she didn’t have the military might
      • to overcome just one of these enemy nations,
        o much less all three of them.

• In an instant, Jehoshaphat was overwhelmed.
  o There was no one to turn to for help,
    • nowhere to go for refuge,
      • and no answer in sight.
  o The situation was hopeless.
    • Judah was overpowered.

**Enemy At The Gates**

• It never ceases to amaze me
  o how quickly life can change.

• How fast we can descend
  o from relative peace and security
    • into those terrible moments
      • when everything simply falls apart.

• One phone call from a loved one
  o in the middle of the night,
    • one routine visit to the doctor,
      • one moment of carelessness at work
• We are like Jehoshaphat was
  o in that moment when he realized,
    ▪ the enemy is at the gate
    ▪ and I am thoroughly unprepared.
• Sometimes life simply overwhelms us.
  o Sometimes the trouble overpowers us.
    ▪ Sometimes the crisis looms larger
      ▪ than we ever thought possible,
        o filling the horizon,
        ▪ dominating everything in our lives.
  o In those moments
    ▪ it seems as if our whole life
      ▪ is consumed by trouble.
• According to one writer
  o there are three kinds of people in this room today:
    ▪ Those who have just been through
      ▪ an overwhelming crisis;
    ▪ those who are currently going through
      ▪ some terrible a crisis;
    ▪ or those who are about to enter
      ▪ into the devastation of a crisis.
  o No matter where you fall
    ▪ on that spectrum today,
      ▪ your life will be marked by crisis.
• Storms will come and they will go
  o on their own schedule.
    ▪ They aren’t convenient,
      ▪ they don’t fit
        o into our blueprint for our lives,
    ▪ they come without regard
      ▪ for all of our carefully laid plans.
• Time and circumstance happens to every man.
  o It rains on the just and the unjust alike.
• It was Peter who admonished the church
  o not to become dismayed
    ▪ when fiery trials come upon you,
      ▪ as if something strange
        o has happened to you.
• Trouble and trial are a part of the fabric of life.
  o They happen to us all.
• From time to time some crisis,
is going to arise in our lives
  - and we will feel like Jehoshaphat felt,
    - we will feel overwhelmed,
      - hopeless and helpless.

Overwhelmed

- David embodied
  - what it feels like to be overwhelmed
    - in the 61st Psalm.
- We read it as our text.
  - David said, Hear my cry, Oh Lord.
    - Attend unto my prayer.
  - From the end of the earth
    - will I cry out to thee.
- The phrase from the end of the earth is a Hebrew-ism
  - that refers not to a geographical location
    - but to a perceived distance
      - from the presence of God.
- When David says that his heart is overwhelmed
  - and he is crying out from the end of the earth
    - what he means is that he feels
      - as if he is a million miles from God.
    - He feels as if there is a great distance
      - between him and God.

- So often in our lives, it is the times of trouble,
  - when our heart is overwhelmed
    - by chaos and crisis,
  - that serve to make us aware of the fact
    - that we have not been as faithful
      - as we meant to be towards God.
- It is the tragedy in our lives
  - that causes us to realize
    - that we’ve allowed some distance
      - to develop between God and us.
- We never meant for that to be the case,
  - we were sincere in our devotion
    - and dedication to God.
  - In our heart we want to serve him,
    - to walk in his blessings,
      - to live in the fellowship of his presence.
- But life has a way of lulling us
  - into a sense of complacency
    - in our walk with God.
When everything is going well,
  - when life is easy,
    - when its is smooth sailing and calm seas,
      - we tend to forget
        - that we can’t do this on our own.

And slowly, but surely,
  - we begin to drift away
    - from our devotion to God.

We begin to grow lukewarm
  - in our passion towards God.

Other things in life become more important,
  - more pressing,
    - more immediate
      - and our walk with God
        - slowly moves to the back burner of our hearts.

Our devotion to God seems to waver,
  - not in times of trouble,
    - but in times of relative peace.

And it is the crisis
  - that serves to remind us
    - of how much we need God.

It is the moment of complete and utter helplessness,
  - the moment when our heart is overwhelmed,
    - that causes us to recognize
      - the distance that has developed
        - between us and God.

That’s when we realize
  - that we are crying out to God
    - from the end of the earth.

In Hebrew thought
  - the tabernacle was the center of their world
    - Not geographically but spiritually
  - and the end of the world
    - was the greatest possible distance
      - you could get from the house of God.

**Master Of The Wind**
- The Bible declares that God is the master of the wind.
  - He doesn’t hold back the storms
    - or the trials and the temptations of this life.
  - Instead he uses them
    - to serve his eternal purpose!
  - He works through the trying times,
    - taking that which was intended for evil
• and turning it into good.
  o He takes that which was intended to destroy us
    ▪ and instead harnesses it for His purpose
    • and for our good.
• The storm reminds us of how much we need God!
  o Ultimately, it becomes a blessing instead of a curse.
• It’s a theme that is echoed throughout the scriptures.
  o Out of terrible tragedy
    ▪ there emerges tremendous triumph.
  o Out of seemingly horrible defeat
    ▪ there arises incredible victory.
  o God takes betrayal and turns it into blessing,
    ▪ He takes debilitating sickness
    • and renders it into incredible healing,
    ▪ He takes death
    • and turns it into a testimony.
• Over and over and over again,
  o out of the eater comes meat.
    ▪ Out of the strong comes sweetness.
    • Out of the bitter flows the refreshing.
  o The same storm that brings about the bad
    ▪ also serves to establish the good.
  o The same tragedy that was intended to be a curse,
    ▪ under the guidance of the master,
    • becomes a blessing!
    ▪ He works all things together for GOOD!
• I have come to the conclusion
  o that the feeling of inadequacy and brokenness
    ▪ that I feel when my heart is overwhelmed
    • is exactly where God wants me to be.
• Because the storm causes me to recognize
  o how much I truly need the help of God
    ▪ to make it through this life.
• It reminds me that I cannot do this on my own,
  o that I cannot save myself,
    ▪ that I desperately need His help.

**The Rock**

• When David finds himself overwhelmed,
  o I want you to notice what he prays:
    ▪ Lead me to the rock.
• David’s prayer was not
  o just that the Lord would hear his cry
• and attend unto his prayer,
  • but that God would lead him
    o to the rock that is higher than him.

• That’s David’s way of saying,
  o God before you fix my problem,
    ▪ fix the distance that has developed
      • between you and me.
  o Lead me to the rock.
    ▪ Set my feet upon that mountain
      • that is higher than I am.
  o Before you deal with my crisis,
    ▪ deal with this distance
      • that has developed
        o between you and me.
  o Because the distance is a greater problem
    ▪ than the looming disaster in my life.

• David recognized that the crisis
  o that has driven him to cry out in despair
    ▪ has only served to highlight
      • a much greater problem in his life.
  o It is the distance
    ▪ that he has allowed to creep
      • between him and God
        o that is the real problem.
  o It is the awkwardness
    ▪ that he feels in his soul
      • as he seeks God in his crisis
    ▪ with the knowledge
      • that he has not sought God
        o in his good times.
  o It is the conviction that strikes deep into his heart
    ▪ as he realizes that he has somehow
      • allowed himself to drift
        o away from the rock
          ▪ that is his fortress
            • and his strength.

• So David prays: Lead me to the rock.
  o David doesn’t pray,
    ▪ save me from my enemy.
  o David doesn’t pray,
    ▪ deliver me from the evil.
  o What he prays is
    ▪ lead me to the rock.
• Bring me closer to you.
  o Bring me back into fellowship with you.
• Make my heart right with you, God.
  
  ▪ Lead me back to that place
  ▪ where my confidence flows from you!
  ▪ Lead me to the rock!
  ▪ I’ve lost something in my life
    o And I must get it back.
  ▪ Let the storm rage,
    o Let the fierce wind blow
  ▪ But take me to the rock!
    o That’s where my help is,
      ▪ That’s where my strength comes from!

• I love the way David describes the rock.
  o It is the rock that is higher than I am.
• There is a place of refuge and safety
  o that soars above me
    ▪ and stands over all
      ▪ of my trouble and tragedy.
  o The waves break against it,
    ▪ the storm does not affect it,
      ▪ it is that immovable rock
        o that is higher than I am.
  o His ways are above my ways.
    ▪ His thoughts are above mine.
      ▪ He is that rock that is higher than I am.
    ▪ I cannot even begin to comprehend him
      ▪ I just know that I can trust him
    ▪ He is that rock that towers above it all!

The Devils Tower
• The Devils Tower National Monument
  o soars more than 1,200 feet
    ▪ above Wyoming’s eastern plains.
• The top of the Devils Tower
  o is roughly the size of a football field
    ▪ and it offers a tremendous view
      ▪ of the surrounding country,
  • however, if you wish to stand on that treasured ground
    o you must be willing to risk life and limb
      ▪ to free climb a sheer volcanic face
        ▪ that is 867 feet from base to summit.
Only 1% of those who attempt the climb
  • Actually reach the top.
• It is a height that can only be attained
  • By an experienced mountain climber.

• Unless, of course, you parachute to the top of it.
  o On October 1st, 1941,
    • George Hopkins, in response to a $50 bet,
      • parachuted from an airplane
        o to the top of the Tower.
  o There was only one hitch.
    • He planned to descend the tower
      • by means of a rope
        o that was also dropped from the same plane,
    • but, while George landed on the tower,
      • the rope missed
        o and George was not a mountain climber.
• It took the National Park Service,
  o who had not been aware
    • of George’s crazy plans in advance,
      • 6 days to figure out
        o how to get him off of the tower
          • in the middle of a terrible winter storm.
• Finally a couple of experienced climbers
  o agreed to scale the heights
    • at the first break in the winter weather
      • and carry a rope up
        o for George to rappel down.

Help Me!
• David’s problem was the opposite of George’s.
  o George needed help getting off of the rock,
    • but David needed help getting on the rock.
• Here’s the thing,
  o even though I can see it,
    • even though I know it stands
      • on the horizon of my faith,
    • I cannot reach the top of that rock on my own.
      • It is the rock that is higher than I am.

• So David cries out to God,
  o **Lead me to the rock.**
    • I need your help God.
      • I need your blessings.
Lead Me To The Rock

- I need your direction for my life.
  - I need to know where I go from here.
    - I realize, once again,
      - what I never should have forgotten
        - in the first place;
      - I desperately need your help.
  - I can’t get to where I need to be
    - without your help!
  - I can’t make it through this storm,
    - without your help!
  - I can’t navigate this crisis
    - without your help!

- **Lead me to the rock!**

- That’s the same kind of reaction that Jehoshaphat had.
  - In the face of looming defeat,
    - as his enemy was bearing down on him,
      - Jehoshaphat organized
        - a national day of prayer.
  - The entire population assembled at Jerusalem,
    - fasting and praying
      - calling out to God.
    - The king himself prayed a beautiful prayer
      - expressing God’s might,
        - the history of God’s provision
      - and God’s promise to come
        - to the aid to his people
          - if they would only humble themselves
            - and seek his face.
    - He ended his prayer with these words,
      - “**We have no power**
        - **against this great multitude**
          - that is coming against us;
        - **nor do we know what to do,**
          - but our eyes are upon You.”

- That’s what David means
  - when he says: **Lead me to the rock.**

- I have no power against the calamity
  - that has overcome me.
    - I don’t know what to do.
      - I don’t know where to turn. I
        - don’t know what the next step should be...
  - But my eyes are on you Lord.
▪ Lead me to the rock!

▪ At the end of Jehoshaphat’s prayer,
  o as the people waited,
    ▪ the LORD spoke through the prophet Jahaziel,
  o instructing the army
    ▪ to march against the invaders without fear,
      ▪ take up their battle positions,
        o and watch the LORD
          ▪ fight their battle for them.

▪ Early the next morning,
  o Jehoshaphat’s army marched to battle.
▪ But, in a surprising turn of events,
  o as they marched against the greatest foe
    ▪ that they had ever faced
      ▪ the army was not led
        o by mighty soldiers and men of war.
  o Instead the army was led by worshippers.
    ▪ They marched to meet the enemy,
      ▪ singing praises to God.
▪ And the Bible says that,
  o as the enemy heard the army of Judah
    ▪ approaching them, singing,
      ▪ they were thrown into confusion.
  o The three armies began fighting with each other,
    ▪ then killing each other.
  o By the time Jehoshaphat’s army reached the battlefield,
    ▪ there was not single survivor among the enemy.

► When you run to the rock, the rock runs to you!

▪ I have a message for you this morning,
  o when you are overwhelmed
    ▪ you need to remember
      ▪ that God is in control of your life.
▪ There is no promise
  o that you will not be overwhelmed,
▪ but there is a promise
  o that, as long as you run to the rock,
    ▪ you will not be overcome!

CLOSE:
▪ This is the last Sunday of 2015.
I don’t know what next year will hold for us.
  - I don’t know what surprises
    - are just around the corner,
      - or what trouble or tragedies may come,
  - but I do know that God has a plan for your life
    - and no matter what tomorrow brings,
      - He is the one who has promised
        - that He will make all things
          - work together for good.

I can think of no better way
  - to close out this year
    - than by joining our voice
      - with that of David and praying,
        - lead me to the rock.
  - Restore me to right relationship with you God.
    - Ignite again a fresh passion
      - for the presence of the Lord.
  - Stir up my heart,
    - stir up my mind,
      - let me remember once again
        - that there is a rock
          - that is higher than I am.

It doesn’t matter today
  - how far you may have drifted from God.
    - It doesn’t matter how much distance
      - has developed between you and God.
One simple prayer,
  - one earnest cry,
    - lead me to the rock!
      - A million miles can fade away
        - and the eternal presence of God
          - is made brand new in your life.

Let me invite you, today,
  - to make the Lord your refuge.
Let me invite you today
  - to close out this year
    - and embrace the next
      - with a simple,
        - heartfelt,
          - life changing cry:
            - Lead me to the rock.
• Bring me back to you Lord.
  o Renew my heart.
    ▪ Refresh my soul.
      • Make everything brand new.
        o Lead me to the rock.

• Would you come?
  o Would you turn your heart towards heaven
    ▪ and would you pledge
      • to get closer to God this year
        o than you have ever been before?