

Sermon

Mary Whitehurst

David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, Austin, Texas

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Psalm 3:1-8 (Reference text 2 Samuel 13-18)

“God’s Got This!”

So, I have always loved music, since I was a small child. I think that’s probably something that’s a little bit universal. There’s something about music that connects all of us. And I also married someone who really loves music and has been gifted and called to write songs. In watching his creative process over this last couple of years—if you guys didn’t know he wrote the David Chapel worship song—that I love. And I got to see him kind of just working through that, in each step of the process. Then he worked with Michael and Alicia to perfect it, and it’s just—it’s amazing. I’m proud every time that we sing it, (I just had to put that out there). But just in watching that process it made me more curious about just the backstory that exists in some of the songs that we love. Have you ever heard a song and just kind of wondered, “I wonder like what was that person thinking and what were they going through when they wrote those lyrics?” I find that particularly poignant when I think about some of the praise and worship music that I listen to. You can just tell that something was happening and God did something amazing when they wrote those lyrics. I think that it helps us be able to understand and really connect with those songs when we know what the inspiration was. So I did a little research and I found a few songs that you might be familiar with and wanted to tell you the backstory.

John Newton was an atheist and a slave owner. He was raised with Christian values, but somewhere along the path he kind of veered and got really entrenched in the slave trade. And was going back and forth getting slaves, auctioning them off. That was how he was making his livelihood. Until one day he was on his ship on the way to a place auction and something happened that changed his life. His boat sailed into a storm and he thought he wasn’t going to make it. It was tossing and turning, it looked like the boat was going to

sink and not knowing what else to do, he dropped to his knees and begged for God to have mercy on him and to save him. He got through that storm, and later on that evening he realized that God absolutely both hears and answers prayers especially when you go to him wholeheartedly. So in 1772, Newton wrote a hymn called “Faith’s Review and Expectation” which we now know today as “Amazing Grace.”

In 1899, there was a young poet and school principal who was asked to address a crowd in Jacksonville, Fla., because they were coming up upon the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s birthday. And as you can imagine this was a turbulent time still. Racism was alive and well, lynchings had started to increase in the South, the segregated South. But instead of preparing an ordinary speech, this young man decided he was gonna write a poem evoking the struggle and resilience of his ancestors. And that following year, a choir of 500 schoolchildren performed the song at Lincoln’s celebration. A song that quickly became the rallying cry for the black community. And that composer was James Weldon Johnson, wrote the song “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,” which we now commonly call the “Black National Anthem.”

And the last one that I found, that was interesting to me...having parents who grew up in the 70s I listened to a lot of 70s music. But on May 15 of 1969, there was a tour bus arrived on the campus of UC Berkley. And it was carrying a Motown vocal group known as the Four Tops. Now this particular day later became known as “Bloody Thursday,” because of the police brutality and violence in the city's People's Park during a protest that was being held by anti-war activists—they were protesting the Vietnam War. And one of the group members Renaldo "Obie" Benson was so upset by what he witnessed that he discussed this incident with one of his friends and songwriters, Al Cleveland, who in turn composed a song. And then later in 1970, Benson took that song to Marvin Gaye, who added a new melody and revised some of the lyrics and the song, you guys all know it...

(singing)

Picket lines and picket signs
Don't punish me with brutality
Talk to me, so you can see
What's going on

Exactly!

So songs mean a little bit more to us when we know what inspired them. The same can be said of some of the poems and the Psalms that we find in the Bible. The passage that was read today my Rev. Emerson is Psalm 3 and it was written by King David. But it doesn't resonate and have the same impact that it's meant to, unless we know the story that's behind it. So I want to start there, just briefly, I won't take much time here. Especially if you're not familiar with it, it's found in 2 Samuel and it starts at chapter 13. So if you want to turn to 2 Samuel you're welcome to. In Chapter 13, just to follow along, I'm not going to read it, cause it's several chapters. But I just wanna give you guys a little bit of the back story.

Now I don't know about you guys, but I grew up with a pretty good knowledge of who King David was, but I only knew about one of his children, and that was Solomon. But David was a little bit of a busy guy. He actually had about 20 children by several different women. And in this particular part of the story that we land in, in 2 Samuel 13 there are three main characters that I want to tell you guys about. So there's his son Amnon, his son Absalom, and his daughter Tamar.

Now in 2 Samuel 13 it tells us that Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar, who Amnon (David's other son) was in love with. Now I know that this could be a little bit confusing, but I just want you guys to come with me on this journey and follow me, because Absalom and Tamar had the same parents: David and the same mom. However, Amnon was David's son but he had a different mother. So he was in love with his half-sister (that's still not okay) but I just wanted you guys to follow me on that. Basically Amnon schemes to pretend that he is sick so that Tamar will have to come and take care

of him and when she does he takes advantage of her, overpowers her and then physically violates her.

And this is not just physically, emotionally, and spiritually traumatic for her, it is also socially devastating, because now she won't be able to get married. Virginity was so sacred to them in that time, that you had to be a virgin when you got married or else you couldn't. And so this put Tamar in a really tough position, and the Scripture actually says that she lived as a "desolate woman in her brother Absalom's house." Absalom was not going to stand for this. This was his sister, he loved her, he brought her into his home so that she wouldn't have to turn to other much less desirable professions. And he took two years to devise a plan to avenge Tamar, and when he unleashed that plan he kills Amnon and flees to Geshur.

So Absalom flees Jerusalem, he stays in Geshur for three years, before David actually sends for him to bring him back. And when Absalom comes back to Jerusalem he doesn't see his dad for two years. He's back in the city, but he doesn't go to see David to seek his fullest forgiveness. When he finally does, he's on good terms, everything's okay, all has been restored—but I believe that there's still something down in Absalom's heart that was a little scarred, a little wounded—a little hardened. Because he starts to aspire to the throne. And when we look at this, Absalom, he actually starts kind of "campaigning." In 2 Samuel 15 it says that he got a nice chariot and lots of horses and he had 50 men run ahead of him, so people would know he was coming. It was like this big pomp and ceremonial fervor and all this splendor around him.

And Absalom they say, the Scripture says not "they," The Scripture says Absalom was a handsome guy, we can assume from what it's telling here he was probably charming, a little persuasive and a little bit manipulative. So he begins to get up early in the morning and he goes and sits at the gate right outside the palace so he can talk to people as they're coming in to see King David. Because the way their government worked, if you had a

dispute, what we might think of in this day and time as maybe like a lawsuit you had to take that before the king for him to settle it. So Absalom is out in front of the palace kind of intercepting people. Asking them where they're from, turning on the charm, getting to know them and saying, "You know, you have a dispute but I don't think you're gonna find justice in there with the king, but if I was king I would definitely get you the justice that you need." So he's campaigning and in 2 Samuel 15:6 says, "Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." So he's starting to get fans. He starting to get "likes" and "follows" and people want to see what Absalom is all about. The word gets to King David that Absalom has won the hearts of the men of Israel and David knows exactly what this means. And he starts to fear that Absalom may try to come and take Jerusalem by force, and so he gets all his family and his servants and he says we have to leave Jerusalem. He doesn't want to bring the fight to the Holy City, he wants to protect it. So he decides, if he's going to bring the fight, we're going to leave the city so he'll have to bring the fight to us. And they head to an encampment on the other side of the Jordan river and take a path over the Mount of Olives.

So when we're looking here, we're almost to where David wrote this Psalm. I'm right here in 2 Samuel 15:30 where it says, "But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as well." David is barefoot and his head is covered—he's the King. But he's barefoot walking up a mountain with his head covered. Those were signs in their culture of mourning and grief. We can only imagine what David must have been feeling in these moments: overwhelmed, devastated, betrayed, probably disappointed, heartbroken—this is his son, that he loves— and probably a little bit angry. I don't know if you guys have ever been betrayed or hurt by someone that you really cared about, but if you have you can probably relate to the space that David was in and the feelings he was experiencing. And these are the moments that inspired Psalm 3.

If we turn our attention back to that text in Psalm, it starts off with David lamenting in verses 1 and 2 he says, “O Lord, how **many** are my foes! **Many** are rising against me; **many** are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.” You see what had started as a small and kind of covert rebellion, had doubled and tripled in size and now hundreds of men of Israel were deciding that they were going to rise up against David—it was a full blown mutiny at this point. And David was being mocked on top of that—people were saying his God will wasn’t gonna take care of him. They were cursing David and saying that he had been abandoned by God. It reminds me just a little bit how fickle we can be as human beings. It just takes a little bit of a change and we’re all ready to jump on a different bandwagon.

But David could have believed these nay-sayers and what they were telling him, but instead he prays in verses 3 and 4, and he says “But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill.”

So David is declaring a few things about God that it’s important for us to know about who God is for us in our lives as well. He’s a the shield around him—in the Hebrew this word is *ganan* which means defense or cover, surround, protect. When I read this it made me think of, you guys forgive me, *Black Panther*. When the Border Tribe, puts up their little, their shields—their cloths that they’re wearing and then that blue shield comes up. It made me see somebody in a circle with all those shields around them—impenetrable, right?

And then David calls God his *glory*. So you are a shield around me and you’re my glory. And that can be better understood as you are my “Glorious One.” David understands, as was common in the Hebrew culture, that they saw YHWH as the Warrior King. He was the one that was going to defend them at all costs. And an earthly king, he might be

called *glorious* because he had vast armies. But David understood that God has vast armies of angelic hosts who He is ready to dispatch to our aid at any given time. And so His glory is much greater than any human power.

And the last part, that I love, is that David says you are the “lifter of my head.” And this is a Hebrew expression stating confidence in the LORD, who has the power to raise up the humble and to strike down the mighty.

You see David knows who he serves. This is the same God who was with him when he struck down Goliath, this is the same God who was with him when he hid in the cave from Saul, and this is the same God who anointed him to be king. So even though things were looking bleak David says, but you oh LORD are who you’ve always been. You’re my shield, you’re my glory, you’re the lifter of my head.

And David cries aloud to the LORD and the LORD answers him. And because of David’s confidence we see that in that humility of crying out for help, in verse 5 David says he was able to rest and sleep even in the midst of those circumstance.

You know we live in a society of stressors and worriers...When I was driving here this morning I thought, it’s almost as if like the media thrives on that, right? Stressing us to and making us worry. You love the teasers that are like, “It could be giving you cancer and you’re eating it every day. Watch us at 10!” They want us to be stressed and worried over every little thing in our lives. And one of the natural side effects of stress and worry is sleeplessness. I don’t know if you guys have ever been there, but I know that I have. Something happens—maybe it’s an escalated issue at work that you have to get figured out, maybe it’s a disagreement with your spouse, maybe it’s you had a falling out with a friend, maybe your kids are just acting crazy and making crazy decisions. And you just can’t get your brain to turn off when you lay down to sleep. You’re tossing and you’re

turning and you're waking up and you're having these weird dreams and you just can't settle because of the stress and the worry.

And as believers we often quote that one Bible verse. Do you guys know the one that I'm talking about over in Philippians 4:6? "The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Paul knew what he was talking about, and David knew this too. So he prayed, in the midst of this terrible, horrible situation—where he is broken, people are against him—he prays and he gives his troubles to God and God gives him peace and rest. He says that God sustains him. And you know I looked on Google, because that's where we go for our information, right? And it says that *to sustain* is to strengthen or support physically or mentally— but the latin origins of that word sustain means "to hold from below."

And you know what this made me think of, oddly enough? It made me think of those crazy rock stars or other performers that you may have seen who will run full speed and dive into the audience and crowd surf. They trust that all these people that they don't know are gonna hold them up in the air and move them around the crowd. But that's what came to mind when I thought about the definition of sustain. Is that if we just trust God enough we can let go of our troubles and our worries and our stressors, and He will sustain us. He will hold us up.

I know I digress, so let me get back to the text. The next verse to me when I read this was so important. If you're following along with me, I'm in verse 6. And in this verse we see that David has looked at his circumstances, he knows that things are looking bad, he knows that people are telling him that God's abandoned him, He's not gonna save him. But David knows who God is and what He's capable of—again shield, lifter of his head, and now sustainer. And in verse 6 he makes a powerful proclamation, and he says

“I. Will. Not. Be. Afraid.” He says, I know that there are thousands of people out there that want to see me fall, I know that they’re coming for me, I know they don’t think I’m gonna survive this, I know that...they don’t know my God though. And because I know God is with me, I know that He has my back, I know that He’s at my side “I will not be afraid!”

We know from 2 Timothy 1:7 that God has not given us a spirit of fear, which means that the spirit of fear that sometimes comes upon us and cripples us is from the enemy. And fear can be so debilitating at times. Fears keeps us from having necessary conversations with people that we care about, people who have hurt us, people who we’ve hurt. Which leads to our relationships being strained and sometimes permanently damaging those relationships. Fear keeps us from standing up for what we know is right—at school, at work, maybe even within our families, even within society. And it keeps us stagnant and stuck in the day to day life-sucking monotony, too scared to step into what we know that God has called us to do.

But hear me on this—Fear is a CHOICE, but thankfully so is FAITH.

And so in verse 6 when David says “I will not be afraid” this is not him being tough and saying “I got this, I’m the man, I’m strong, I’m courageous.” ***This is a statement of faith.*** So David understands who he serves. He understands that because God is with him, he does not have to be afraid.

And if we bring our focus back to those last two verses, of this short little eight verse Psalm, verses 7 & 8 David calls upon the LORD to rise up and humiliate his enemies and take away their strength. That’s what he means when he says “you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.” Then he concludes, by saying “my salvation”—(my saving) is up to God—“your blessings be on your people.” So, David basically concludes “God’s Got This!” I don’t have to worry, I don’t have to lose sleep. I am still sad and hurt, but I know that God has got this.

And one of the things that I was just thinking through last night as I was working through this text and God was just kind of showing me things and putting things on my heart is that, there is something that has happened to us culturally inside the body of Christ. That somehow some of us have come to believe that living the Christian life, when lived “right,” means being happy, and having what we want, and being prosperous, and never having any troubles—#livingyourbestlife. But when we study the Scriptures I don’t see evidence of that. I find things like Matthew 5:11-12, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” But nobody’s gonna put that on their social media page—#reviled #persecuted #blessed! Nobody wants to do that, right? But that is the Christian life. That is what we are called to do when He calls us to take up our cross daily and follow him. That is what that looks like. And it just means that sometimes it gonna be really tough.

But the truth is that all of us, like David, have a foe. I don’t want you to get distracted by David’s particular story of the thousands of people who were coming against him, because it wasn’t about the men that were coming against him—because don’t wrestle against flesh and blood—it was about the adversary that we all have. The adversary that Peter warns us about in 1 Peter 5:8 when he says “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” That is our foe. He’s the one who rises up against each of us. And when he attacks we have to remember Who we serve and that His glory is greater than the power of the enemy.

The enemy is coming for us all the time; that’s what spiritual warfare is. And I have to say this, if this is okay Pastor, I think I just need to talk—because you guys know ai love young people and I worked with the youth for many years. I’m seeing LaMon and Melvin and all these children that I helped, hopefully space (I don’t know) but when they were in

Children's Church. And I'm praying over the last few weeks and days because I know that they're about to go off to college. The enemy likes to strike in times of transition, when we don't expect him to. And so this is relevant to all of the students, but specifically to our college students—I want you to be aware that the enemy is going to come for you. He is gonna try to introduce you to the wrong friends, he's gonna try to convince you to go party instead of studying for you're tests, he's gonna try to get you in relationships you have no business being in, he's gonna try to convince you that because everybody is wildin' out you need to be wildin' out too. And I'm not telling you this to scare you, I'm telling you this so that you will be on alert. Do not believe his lies. You will have the covering of the prayer of this church family, but you will still have to be prayerful yourself. You'll have to prayer over the new friends that you meet, and over the potential relationships, and over the classes that you're gonna take, and the tests that come up, and all the temptations that are gonna arise as soon as you step foot on that campus. Just know that he's waiting. So you have to be prayed up yourself, just as David was.

If you don't hear anything else that I have said today, I want you all to know that when trials come—when trials come, not if—when trials come and the enemy rises up against you, you don't have to be afraid. And you can know that our God that we serve is greater than any circumstance. I know that there were probably some of you who walked in this sanctuary today in just a tough space. I know that there was probably someone who walked in today and was worried and stressed and overwhelmed, maybe even just about to crumble underneath the weight of your problems. For somebody in here it might have taken every last bit of will and strength that you had to make it here today. And I get that...because I've been there. I've been there recently. Where I have argued with God and said I don't wanna go, I don't want hear it, it's not gonna make a difference because I was so wrapped up in the attacks. I was so beat down by the attacks. Because one of things that I don't think we talk about enough is that yes, the enemy can cause circumstances to change and things to happen but the greatest battle field that you will

fight is in here [pointing to head]. It is what he tells you, you can't do, it's what he tells you that you're not, its the lies he tell us about who God is. So I know that feeling, but each and every time that I've argued with God about not coming to church and somehow I've still wound up sitting in one of these pews, or maybe in the back—it never fails—that I encounter Him, that I hear a word that was the exact thing that I needed to hear in that moment, in that season, during that trial. It is amazing how God orchestrates that.

So I understand that struggle and if you are in a space of struggle today I think that God really wants you to know that He has not forgotten you. That He loves you, that He sees, He sees you struggling. And for some of us we're struggling because we have decided we're gonna carry this all by ourselves. But all it takes is a step of faith, to lay our burdens down at His feet and to lean back, and like my 6-year-old son says, "Ready, Setty, Go!" and just run full speed and jump into the arms of Jesus. And I promise you if you can do that today, He will sustain you. He will hold you up, and make sure that you don't fall. But we have to surrender that.

David did that. He knew who God was, he gave it to God. And David was victorious. In 2 Samuel 18, the strangest thing happens to Absalom. When you think about weird ways that people can fall to an enemy—Absalom is riding on a donkey, or a mule, and the donkey decides to go under an oak tree and Absalom's head get stuck between branches and the donkey keeps going. He hung himself. If that is not God fighting for somebody. Nobody had to be killed, nobody had to draw their sword, He took care of that. But David prayed—he knew that God was his shield, his glory, the lifter of his head, his sustainer and he stepped back and said "God's got this."

There something so powerful I've found, and I'm closing I promise, over the last several years. I remember reading a post, I believe by Beth Moore, about the power of praying Scripture. And I was so excited when I felt God placing Psalm 3 on my heart a few weeks ago because, to be completely honest I had never paid much attention to Psalm 3 before

studying for this sermon, but I got excited because I was like “oh this is another one that I can pray.” Because I can see myself in a storm, in a battle with the enemy coming for me, and saying “LORD, the adversary is coming for me, but I know who You are, I know that You are the shield around me, I know that You are my glory, I know that You are the lifter of my head and my sustainer. I know that about You.”

The first verse or Scripture that I ever learned to pray was Psalm 23 (is it okay if I come down here with y’all?) I think that this was the piece of preparing for this message that was the hardest for me, because if I can be real with you guys, if I can be transparent, this part of what I’m about to say is the first thing that God put on my heart and I said “no, I don’t, I don’t wanna talk about that, it’s not time.” But he brought back to my memory everything that He has brought me through. I’m only 34, you would think I hadn’t been through very much, but surprisingly I have. And the first time that I prayed the Scriptures I had remember Psalm 23 with a Bible study when I started seminary. Some of you may remember that, or some of you don’t know this, but my son is 6 years old and he was born two months early through emergency c-section. So the first time that God put it on my heart to pray a Scripture, was Psalm 23 when I sat on the operating table about to have a c-section and they could not get my spiral tap in, the spiral block. They stuck me and stuck me and stuck me and it hurt and I had to keep breathing and I was just in my head saying Psalm 23—and calming myself down. That was the first time that it happened. And overtime since then when I am sad, when I am hurting, when I am broken, and when I am angry I can pray Psalm 23 and it reminds me who God is.

The last four years for me have been extremely difficult. Four years ago the enemy came for my marriage. And not a lot of people know what we have walked through this last four years. But there have been many days that I have wanted to give up. And many nights where I have sat on the floor of my bedroom praying Psalm 23. And I just have to say this, I didn’t ask for their permission, and I hope that it is okay, because I just need you guys to know the type of people we have in this church. That for the last four years

Coletta and Leonard Haskin and Charlene and Raymond Gregory have walked with us every step of the way. And made sure that we stayed strong and made sure that we were praying and made sure that we had support. I have texted this women at 3 o'clock in the morning and she has called me to make sure that I could hold it together.

But in those moments when I'm by myself, that is the moment when I have to say, "The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside the still waters, He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name sake. Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil because you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, you anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over. And when I get to the end that's always when I'm ready to shout, because surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Because God has got this! I don't have to worry, I can throw up my hands and I can say "I know You have it, I know You have it." And if you know Him like I know Him and He's brought you through something I want you to say "God's got this! [congregation echoes]—God's got this! God's got this!" Right now He's got this, no matter what you came in feeling and carrying, He's got this! Glory be to God! Glory be to God!

There is significance in this mountain, this Mount of Olives. This passage in 2 Samuel is the first time that it's mentioned, but we probably remember it from when Jesus was coming to enter into Jerusalem a week before his crucifixion. They call it the trumpet entry—the triumphal entry. He had to pass through the Mount of Olives. We also probably remember it from that last night when Jesus was betrayed, after he had that meal with His disciples and he went to go pray at the Garden of Gethsemane. That garden sits of the foot of the Mount of Olives. So David prayed and surrendered there and the later Jesus, the Messiah, prayed and surrendered there. He said "Lord if its possible let this cup be taken from me; yet, not my will, but your will be done." And he went on to surrender

His life to be the ultimate and perfect sacrifice. He died for our sins so that we can have access to this free gift of salvation. And that's available to us at anytime that we want to accept it, and there may be someone today that needs to say "Yes." They may be someone today that is just crumbling and needs to be able to set those burdens down and say "I don't know how this is gonna go, but I'll give it a try." If you're here today and you want to find out more about this Jesus that we talk about, you think you might be ready to have a conversation, make a commitment we invite you to come now.