

Celebrating the Word and Work of God among Us

Psalm 91

Thesis: We want to celebrate the word and work of God among us, for he prepared us for this season. We can be confident he will be with us through this crisis and will use it for his glory and for our good.

Text: Psalm 91:14-16

According to Ephesians 2:20-22, the church is *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:20-22 (NIV).*

God has created us, individually and corporately, to be his temple, his home, his dwelling place.

As a congregation, we want God to be at home in us.

In his goodness, God has given apostolic leaders and prophetic voices to help us to live and to build according to the Master's plan.

Last year, Apostle Mosy Madugba gave us a corrective word as a congregation. He told us to return to our first love. He said, "God says to Calvary: 'Give me back that fiery passion which you gave to me before.'"

Our leadership team processed that word. Together, we took intentional steps to fast and pray, from August – December of 2019, in order to respond to this word of returning to our first love. Then, we kicked off the new year with a **21-Day First Love Fast**, because we wanted to pursue deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus.

As we were reflecting on what God is saying to us in this season, Joshua Rushing pointed out something very powerful to us in our team Zoom call on Wednesday, April 7.

I want to thank the Lord for what Joshua pointed out at Staff Meeting from Psalm 91.

It is good news that the Lord is in control and he has spoken to us, positioning us for blessing.

The Lord called us back to our first love this past year. He is the one who gave us the grace to pray and fast for deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus.

Listen to what Joshua said in our time of sharing as a staff.

Remember how the Lord called us to return to our first love last year? Then, the Lord told us to enter into a 21-day **First Love Fast** to start 2020. The focus of that fast, and the word for this year of 2020, is **deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus**. The Lord positioned us perfectly for these challenging days.

So, the Lord wants us to keep pressing into intimacy with our Living God in this season of stay home and work safe. We want to use this season for good spiritually.

The Lord set us up for blessing in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

14 "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble,

I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him

and show him my salvation"

(Psalms 91:14-16 NIV).

God caused us to return to our first love. Our God caused us to pursue deeper intimacy and to after fuller partnership with our Bridegroom King.

And look what God promises to those who love him from Psalm 91:14-16. God says:

1. I will rescue you.
2. I will protect you because you acknowledge my name (who God is).
3. I will answer you when you call on me.
4. I will be with you in trouble.
5. I will deliver you.
6. I will honor you.
7. I will satisfy you with long life.
8. I will show you my salvation.

Let's pause and meditate on what I just shared. This is who God is for me... for you... for us... for Calvary in this season.

Only our God, the Master Strategist, could have positioned us for such blessing. Only the Living God could have prepared us for such a time as this. Only God.

Who God is and what God has done are on full display— his wisdom, grace, provision, sufficiency, abundance, foresight, and goodness.

We declare: There is no one like you, O God, no one like you.

We stand in awe of you, O God.

Now, I want to shift gears and address something that hits us as Westerners from passages like Psalm 91.

We all know of Christians, good followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who have suffered trials, tragedies, trauma, or even death. Where was the God of Psalm 91 for them?

An odd feature of Western Christian attitudes is the way such examples trouble us so much that it is hard for us to hear the promises. The Psalms make clear that people did notice the occasions when the promises did not find fulfillment, yet this awareness didn't [cause them to doubt the promises.

One can't always explain why God doesn't fulfill his promises, though one can sometimes see what God brings out of such failures....

Given that such can be the aftermath of the promises' failure, we are emboldened to meditate on the promises in such a way as to base our lives on them and not to lose their impact through fretting about the occasions when they fail (Old Testament for Everyone - Psalms for Everyone: Part 2: Psalms 73-150).

Facing two sets of facts

Our God is the God of covenant, truthfulness, and commitment. There is a link between God's acts in creation and God's acts in the history of his people. That is helpful to remember when things go awry in either creation or in the lives of his people.

Suppose creation looks unstable; reflecting on the truthfulness of God's acts in Israel's story, in Jesus, and in the Spirit helps to reinforce one's conviction about the stability of creation. Or suppose we can't see God's actions in history, in Jesus, and in the Spirit; reflecting on the reliability of God's work in creation helps reinforce our conviction about God's involvement in history (Old Testament for Everyone - Psalms for Everyone: Part 2: Psalms 73-150).

Our God is faithful through all generations. And, we can remind him of his covenants, commitments, and truthfulness in every situation. Yes, bad things happen to good people. Yes, our God can work all things together for those who love him and are called according to his purpose of being conformed into the image of his Son (Romans 8:28). Yes, our God makes huge promises, covenants, and commitments; he is trustworthy and true to fulfill his word. Yes, sometimes life doesn't go like we expect and it looks like the Lord let us down. **I think of the stories of Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Hannah, Elisabeth, Paul, and other people of faith throughout history.** They encountered setbacks, apparent unanswered prayers, and had to overcome by the grace of the Lord. **I think of the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11, people who died having not received the full promises of God.** And, the Lord was with them and never left them.

Here is reality: Even if bad things happen in this world because of sin, satan, or this broken world, God is still at work. God is still on his throne. God is still keeping his promises, his covenant, and his commitments. **In the end, people of faith and relationship with God will see the ultimate victory of the Lord.** Along the way, there may be lost battles here or there. **But I have good news today: Our God will win the war and will have the final say.** In the end, we will see how he worked everything for our good (Romans 8:28-29) and how he summed up everything in his Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10 NASB).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, 8 which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth (Ephesians 1:3-10 NASB77).

That's how I handle these tensions as a person of faith. **I don't put my faith in everything working out the way I think it should work out.** I put my faith in a person, the Lord God Almighty. I am not ashamed to be a believer and I do not feel the need to defend the Lord. I know whom I have believed in, and I am persuaded that he can keep that which I have committed to him against that day (2 Timothy 2:12).

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. 8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of

God, 9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. 13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you--guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us (2 Timothy 1:7-14 NIV).

You can count on the God who has revealed himself to us through his written word and through Jesus Christ. You can trust him, even through times of trials, tragedy, and trauma. You can trust him to be with you. He will never leave you. He will never forsake you.

Brothers and sisters, in the midst of this COVID-19 crisis, I want to challenge you to pursue intentionally deep intimacy with Jesus through regular spiritual practices like prayer, devotional Scripture reading, worship, intercession, silence, solitude, journaling, fasting, and other spiritual disciplines. I want to challenge you to pursue intentionally full partnership with Jesus by listening to his voice, obeying his Holy Spirit, and joining God in touching others with his love and goodness in your spheres of influence.

We want to celebrate the word and work of God among us, for he prepared us for this season. We can be confident he will be with us through this crisis and use it for his glory and for our good.