

Psalm 25

Facts and Faith During A Pandemic

Ryan Perz – March 22, 2020

Intro: I never imagined that I would preach to an empty church sanctuary and still be on a church payroll. We are taking a break from Acts to focus our attention on the COVID-19 pandemic. One of our major news outlets in Columbia has a theme, *Facts not Fear* (WLTX). I appreciate that. Anytime there is public panic, there is a temptation to get more sensational than sensible. Thankfully God has given us his Word, and in particular the Psalms to root our hope in facts that lead to faith, and away from fear. Ps 25 is one of those Psalms.

- We will look at several facts about God that lead us down the pathway of faith.
- Stylistically, it's written as an acrostic poem. Each line begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet in consecutive order.

Fact 1: God is trustworthy at all times (1-5)

- This psalm is a prayer asking for God to protect, guide and forgive. In one sense it covers the most essential human needs we have.
- But it's not just a prayer for help, it's also written as a pledge of commitment and loyalty.

I've watched multiple videos of pastors addressing COVID-19. One that caught my attention was from a pastor I had in my life in my 20's. This wise pastor encouraged his church to trust God; that times will be difficult, but then he added this, "Some people will draw closer to God in this moment, others will do the opposite."

This is why we need God's Word, to anchor our hearts in the right place!

Anything that shakes up our lives has the potential to shake up our faith.

- This psalm of David is written during a time of trouble. We are not sure exactly what kind, but it's written from a man under stress, tension, and trouble.

The first fact we learn is this: *In times of trouble, our first look should be to God.*

- Expressed in v1— To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. This is language of prayer, an expression of trust. In other words, David says (my paraphrase), “when things get bad and unsettled, the first place I’m going to run to is God in prayer.”
- David plants the stake of trust firmly in the ground - v2 “O my God, in you I trust”.

Trust is a massive word in human language.

- Marriage stand or falls on trust
- Students can be expelled for cheating, breach of trust
- Employment stands or falls on the basis of trust
- Churches do well if people trust each other and leadership

For relationships to work, there must be trust. This reminds us of how relational God is. All relationships need to have a foundation of trust. A lack of trust means all things fall apart!

Fact: *The Lord is trustworthy.*

- Question: How do we show that we trust him? What does our response look like?

There are two that stand out

1. Waiting, mentioned multiple times (3, 5, 21)
2. Teachability (v4-5)

What does the way/ways of the Lord refer to?

- The way of the Lord can be his commandments (we call this *devotion*).
- But the way of the Lord can also refer to his guidance (we call this *direction*).

I really don’t know which David had in mind. But I think it’s fitting for us to pray: teach me what is needed to be devoted to you, and also teach me your direction.

There is a special measure of grace needed in a pandemic for direction. As so many things have changed, and may change, we need to pray for God’s direction and trust he will guide us. It’s a fact that God is trustworthy at all times.

Fact 2: God is merciful toward humble people (6-15)

- Starting in 6-7, David prays for God's mercy.
- It's a sandwich of mercy
- The bread: David asks God to give special attention to his mercy, steadfast love, covenantal commitment. This anchors our hope on things God *has promised*—a good guiding principle in prayer: anchor your prayers on the promises of God.
- The meat: Remember not the sins of my youth
- Twice David owns his sin - "my" sin (v7, 11)

—Let's lock in on vs 11 for a moment. It's at the heart of this Psalm (v11); this is also the greatest prayer request, "Pardon my guilt, for it is great!"

CSB—Pardon my iniquity for it is *immense*.

Note that David does not say, "Look at King Saul, he's such a great sinner." Or, "those Philistines and Amalakites—those enemies of yours...great sinners."

Pardon my iniquity for it is immense.

- Immense. That almost sounds pandemic, doesn't it. At least inside of the person. It had the tendency to touch and infect everything. It's what we call total depravity.

The apostle Paul had a similar appeal to God's mercy in his life.

(1 Tim 1:12-17 CSB)

¹⁵This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them. ¹⁶But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

It's almost as if Paul was quite familiar with the fact of Ps 25. God has mercy for the humble. And he pardons guilt for his name's sake (1 Tim 1:17).

Are you familiar with the God of Ps 25, a God who gives mercy to the humble? Do we know that greater than the pandemic called COVID-19 is the infection of our sin? Do you see yourself as a great sinner?

We are great sinners, but God's mercy is greater. Jesus Christ is a great Savior for great sinners, like King David, Saul of Tarsus, and like you and me.

The worst place to be in is to deny this fact and think that sin is not big deal, that it's just a few missteps. Sin is pandemic. Our hope to recover is not self-quarantine, or social distancing, but a perfect Savior who was not infected, but takes the infection for us.

(2 Cor 5:21)

²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Fact 3: God cares at the personal level (16-22)

- The final fact we see as the psalm closes out, is that God cares at the personal level.

There are two items that draw our action and shows how God cares—and what he expects from us.

1. God cares about our *condition* (16-20)

- The psalm is honest about difficult times. But it turns difficulty into prayer.

2. God cares about our *conduct* (21)

- Does it strike you that the very last petition is David asking that his actions would be all God-honoring?
- Reading this may shape how we approach COVID-19. One of our main priorities does not need to be TP, or stockpiling groceries for the next 3 months; our greatest need is to *live and act godly*.

A pandemic will have the tendency to bring the best and worst out in people. Some will live with selfless actions, others will turn more inward.

The fact is that almost all of us will have a lot more time. What will we do with it? As the saying goes, *idle hands are the devil's workshop*.

King David fell into great sin when he was idle and relaxed. Let that be a word of caution. Be careful with what you do with your time. Let's stay away from things that may entice us to sin. Let integrity and uprightness preserve us.

Finally, it's not just what we do alone, but how we look to the needs of others.

This is not a time to become more self-centered, but more self-sacrificing. That's the way of the cross and our Savior.

A leading geneticist Francis Collins was interviewed in the Atlantic about flattening the curve of the pandemic. Listen to what he had to say.

"Collins also spoke about civic responsibility and the importance of *selflessness in the midst of a pandemic*. "I think we as a nation have to get into a place of not just thinking about ourselves, but thinking about everybody else around us, and particularly the most vulnerable people—"

As God's people, with the truth of his Word, we ought to lead the way in self-sacrificing lifestyles in this moment.

It will look different from person to person. It may be self-sacrifice inside the four walls of our home, or for our church family or neighbor. Friends, let make sure we don't go nuts and think only of ourselves. Let's remember how Jesus lived and taught us to live.

(Mk 10:45)

⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Conclusion:

As we close, let the facts from Psalms bring God's truth to us.

By his help, let's live by Faith in this moment. A faith that trusts, fears God, seeks integrity and uprightness, and waits for his good purposes to unfold.