

Sermon on Psalm 13 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Psalm 13:1-6

A life of anxiety is survived by singing.

I am confident that there are few people that would reject categorizing our current age as an age of anxiety.

When we spend a couple of years talking about “unprecedented times” there is an abiding uncertainty that enmeshes itself in the fabric of society. Fear is monetized and crisis amplified at every turn.

I have seen it said that there is more information in one edition of the NYT today than the average human would have in a lifetime in 1900. We are overloaded!

Things we look to for dissociation, to get away (social media), actually increase the sense of despair. This is a perilous age.

“Anxiety blankets our society and our lives like a thick, wet, bone-chilling fog.”
Mark Sayers, *A Non-Anxious Presence*

But, truth be told, this sense, the worry so prevalent, is part of the human condition. Since sin corrupts, in every age, God has used perilous times to draw his people to secure spacious places.

“We must see it not as a disaster but as an opportunity for rebirth, renewal, and revival. In the Scriptures, the wilderness—that challenging and chaotic place—is transformed into an arena of spiritual growth where leaders encounter the presence of God and become non-anxious presences in an anxious world.” MS

Some of us find ourselves in the wilderness. We need relief for ourselves, and the Kingdom brought to bear in our age.

Coming out of the pandemic, I have been surprised by my own anxiety, its effects on my health, on my hope. I have learned to come to the Psalms to hear something better. To teach me to pray. To teach me to sing.

That's how we get there...

A life of anxiety is survived by singing.

Context of Psalm 13: We don't know when David wrote this... We don't know the occasion that necessitated it. But it follows after another lament, a cry for help. A sense that all is lost...

“Help, Lord, for no faithful one remains; the loyal have disappeared from the human race. 2 They lie to one another; they speak with flattering lips and deceptive hearts.” -- **Psalms 12:1-2** (CSB)

Something was happening in the collective experience of God's people and lament was their answer.

Lament - a passionate expression of grief or sorrow. Unique in the collected songs of God's people. Crying out, in distress for God. Anchoring our hopes in him when the clouds are dark.

Our psalm resounds with what we have all felt. Anxiously waiting for God to act. To experience his presence and the peace that promises.

In this short psalm, we see Requiem, Request, and Resolve. And we will take them in that order!

Requiem

“a Mass for the repose of the souls of the dead...a musical composition setting parts of a requiem Mass, or of a similar character.”

It is not a happy song.

Truth is, I needed an “R word” for Lament! But I think it matches here because the intensity of the cry/lament feels like death.

“How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long will I store up anxious concerns within me, agony in my

mind every day? How long will my enemy dominate me?" -- **Psalms 13:1-2** (CSB)

How long, Lord? Nowhere else in the OT is this question posed with such urgency as in these verses (i.e., four times in quick succession). There is intensity here we don't always recognize.

I don't think the church has done Lament well. We have failed to disciple each other to the holistic encounter with God we see throughout Scripture. In our modern era of "happy clappy Christianity" there has been more attention it seems on always putting on a good face.

Maybe this posture is rooted in the right place. We see joy as a command in Scripture, so even when it feels so far away we learn to pretend. Everything is "fine" we learn to say.

Studying the Psalms seems to be a reclaiming of honesting. The Psalms give us permission to be realists. To say what is on our hearts and minds, what dominates our souls.

When it feels like God has forgotten us. When his presence is imperceptible.

When anxious concerns overwhelm us.

When we are convinced that other people think about us - see s as enemies. Like they are out to get us, to ruin us.

We don't need cute stories of illustration here, because you have felt this. Uncertainty, as if you are outside looking in, as if no one is on the other end listening.

The Psalms invite us to be honest about it.

"...pour out your hearts before him. God is our refuge." -- **Psalms 62:8** (CSB)

Especially in those moments when we tell ourselves "we shouldn't be thinking this way" we are spurred on by Scripture to sing it to the Lord. "How long?"

It is safe to sing this requiem - to bare it all before God. He shares our concerns... that's the point of this relationship.

“When we are in pain, God feels the sting in his chest. Our frustrations and questions do not fluster him. He knows all about them. He wrote the book on them. More astoundingly, he invites us to come and air our grievances before him.” Mark Vroegop

“David asks how long he has to wait until the Lord addresses concerns David knows the Lord also has. David's questions, then, seem designed to motivate the Lord to do what he knows the Lord wants to do.” James Hamilton

Lament is the gravel in the voice of the Christian, the seasoned experience of real life. But one that has a place to go, a direction to point our pain, our anxiety, our uncertainty and impatience.

It reveals an abiding belief in God that defines our lives.

“Lament directs our emotions by prayerfully vocalizing our hurt, our questions, and even our doubt. Turning to prayer through lament is one of the deepest and most costly demonstrations of belief in God.” MV

Lament becomes petition. Requiem turns in Request.

Request

The next two verses of this song make specific requests for action or relief. This is the petition in the prayer.

“Consider me and answer LORD my God.”

I don't remember the show, but I remember the refrain. A married couple was learning to recognize the other's needs and desires, and they had been taught the phrase “I see you and I hear you.” It was quite funny because just saying the phrase didn't mean they actually heard them or saw them...

This is the longing for us. To be seen by God. Recognized and heard. We know intellectually that God hears us, but we long to experience him answering us.

Answer with his presence. With an end to the anxiety.

We can convince ourselves that we need to buck up and handle our business. That we need to pull it together and see things clearly. Tackle our problems. Learn new strategies to manage life.

All of this is good. But when it replaces the need for help from the Lord it leads to languishing.

Lament help us recognize weakness is not a negative in reliance on God. He is the One we need to act.

From a lament of Israel... “For they did not take the land by their sword — their arm did not bring them victory — but by your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, because you were favorable toward them.” -- **Psalms 44:3** (CSB)

You are not enough. And rather than that statement driving up your anxiety, it is meant to encourage you toward the One who is enough. Who has promised to keep you, protect you from your enemies, deliver you from this anxious age.

Where we bring our requests.

“Restore brightness to my eyes...” Relief, light up my eyes, help me to see hope. To look over the horizon. To focus on something better, truer.

Rogue One; All seems lost, the rebellion doesn't have what they need to accomplish the task... Jyn Erso: “We have hope. Rebellions are built on hope!”

This is the opposite of anxiety. This is what we need, a vision of what God longs to see in this world. Restoration. Life. Peace.

The request stays honest. ‘If you don't see me and answer - feels like I will die. My enemy will triumph, foes rejoice.’ All of this is the opposite of the promise of God.

So David teaches us to pray like this - “God do it, not just because I want it, but so your name isn't tarnished.”

This is request for self - for his good to be experienced, to know his presence and peace so that others will see.

And it has to be God. “because I am shaken.”

The song goes on, from shaken to something stable, something solid to hold onto.

Resolve

“But I have trusted in your faithful love - my heart will rejoice in your deliverance.”

In the midst of uncertainty. Consuming anxiety. It is anticipating the promise of deliverance... letting that settle and shape you.

“I will sing to the Lord because he has treated me generously.”

“He vows to praise God because of his past experience that God has been good to him (v. 6); that is, his confidence in the future is rooted in his experience of God in the past.”

The anxious heart finds hope here. From the cry for help, the lament of how long. To the request for an answer, for relief, to remaining rooted in what the Lord has done for you as the way to get through. Singing to survive.

Even if you don't feel like you have a lot of history of this “generosity,” you have the greatest act to keep you above water...

You have been rescued by Jesus.

Once without hope, adrift under your own devices. Unable to reach the perfection needed to stand before your creator, to fulfill what you were made for. And Jesus. He comes into flesh. To experience with human eyes and emotions. To become a sympathetic high priest. To see us and to hear us, and to answer with his grace, forgiveness, new life, and purpose in him.

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ² in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. ³ We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! ⁶ He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — ⁹ not from works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.” -- **Ephesians 2:1-10** (CSB)

Saved and never let go... come what may.

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” -- **Romans 8:38-39** (CSB)

I will sing to the Lord because he has treated me bountifully!

“He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he pulled me out of deep water. ¹⁷ He rescued me from my powerful enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. ¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. ¹⁹ He brought me out to a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.” -- **Psalms 18:16-19** (CSB)

“David is so confident that God will deliver him that he begins to “sing” even before resolution has occurred (Ps. 13:6). We have an even greater basis for such confidence because we know this salvation hope finds its final fulfillment in Christ, who provides “hope” that “does not put us to shame” (Rom. 5:3–5). Such an honest prayer by David invites Christians to express all of their pain to the heavenly Father. After all, Christ’s substitution means that the believer can never be rejected (2 Cor. 5:21). Our experience of God’s goodness will be the same as the psalmist’s—never mere sustenance, but bountiful blessing from an

extravagant God who “graciously” gives us “all things,” because he gave his Son for us all.” GTB

This is for you Saints. Do you hear this song? Of the finished work of Jesus for you. Your permanent place with him for all of eternity. Rejoice in his deliverance - now and when it comes.

From salvation, our eyes clear up and see myriad ways God’s faithfulness has been revealed in our lives.

We sing it - we worship our way through. Driven by doxology. “Praise to God.” Worship. Response to what has been done for us, what has been given to us. And doxology is a way of life. It is how the Psalmist existed, what he models for us.

This is why Christians sing so much. And it is why we should sing more... sing louder!

Recounting the faithfulness of God. The graciousness of Jesus. The work of the Spirit in our lives.

This is how we pray - honestly, specifically, melodiously!

We sing to survive.

There is something else here... One reference I came across in my study this week suggested that Psalm 13 was “and individual lament...” And I want to make sure you see that it isn’t.

This is felt by the individual but sung back in community. The superscript for Psalm 13 says “For the Choir director. A psalm of David.” *To the choirmaster.*

This is for the assembly of believers. You don’t have to live your lament alone. Our voices are meant to carry each other. We sing together.

“God created music with soul-stirring power, and the Bible is the greatest songbook that has ever been written. The Bible is filled with songs of praise, of lamentation, of redemption. Whatever befalls us, there is a song recorded as chapter or verse to speak to our heart and bring us closer to God.”

Lives of anxiety are survived by singing.

One word of application: **Sing.**

Honestly before the Lord. You are secure in Christ, you can tell him how you think, how you feel. He will hear you and answer you. Lament is a rich untapped reservoir of God's grace.

With resolved hope. Because Jesus has already rescued you, you can trust him to carry you all the way home.

Loud enough for others to hear. Psalm 13 asks for deliverance so others will see, let's sing our way to it.

More than ever this is what our neighbors need. Not political power. Not fear of conspiracy. Not amplified angst. Instead a non-anxious, settled presence. Voices singing to the Lord because he has treated us generously.

Let's sing!