
Hey, my name is Ryan. I'm one of the pastors around here. And to everyone at the campuses and watching online, welcome—so glad that you are with us today.

Just so you know a little bit about us, our mission as a church is to remove barriers that are keeping people from Jesus. That's why we do what we do and that's why we created something called Growth Track. And it's happening at every campus after every service today.

And what it is is it's a tool, it's a class, and hopefully when you come in here it helps you get connected to other people and it helps you grow closer to Jesus as well. So stop in there before you roll out today. Once again, that's Growth Track.

As far as today goes, today we're continuing in our series *Summer In The Psalms*. And what we've been doing in this series is looking at this really unique book of the Bible called Psalms. And what makes the Psalms so unique is that most of the Bible, when you look at it, is written from the vantage point of God to us, right? Maybe that's what you expected. It's God saying: Hey, to have the best life possible, to live life to the full, do these things and don't do these things. It's God making promises and making himself known in a way that completely shapes us. That's most of the Bible.

But Psalms are different though in the sense that instead of God's word to us, the Psalms are actually our words to God. It shows us what it looks like to communicate with the God of this universe, which is pretty wild and actually really helpful. Because if you are anything like me, prayer, at times, can be hard.

I love the quote that Brockett used last week from Eugene Peterson where he said, "Faced with the prospect of conversation with a holy God who speaks worlds into being, it's not surprising that we have trouble with prayer."

Because, I mean, what do we say? How do we start this thing off? Where do we even begin?

Maybe you can relate to this. I think a lot of times prayer is so hard for us because it can feel like small talk with someone that we hardly know, right? And small talk is the worst. I mean, I'm not good at it and I don't think anyone really enjoys it.

I'm really bad at it. So whenever I get into a situation with someone and we're talking and if there's not enough of a relationship there where we can move beyond the surface and talk about stuff that really matters, I panic. I end up saying something weird, and looking at my feet until the conversation is over, alright?

I remember when I used to work for Indy Parks, part of my job every day was to take the deposit to the bank. Take the deposit in, give it to them, get a receipt, go back—seems easy enough. Until the small talk starts. My mind does not have a way to process it.

So I go in to the bank, the teller is there, and I do my small talk thing, right? “Hey, how are you?”

“Good. You?”

“Good.”

That’s it. And man, I take the deposit and I go to slip it under the glass. In this establishment they had glass that always separated the people from the employees. I wouldn’t recommend this vibe if you’re going for anything that is hospitable. But that’s what they had, alright?

So go to put the money underneath the glass and as I do my hand touches the glass. And I grab it. And without even thinking I said, “Wow! This glass is thick. Is it bullet proof?”

Now, if you want to know a question you should never ask a bank employee while you’re inside a bank it’s: Is this bullet proof? She looked at me. Her eyes got huge and I realized what I just said so I’m like panicking, “No, no.” I tried to assure her that I’m not going to rob the bank, which I’m pretty sure I was just making her think that I really wanted to rob this bank. And I remember just putting my head down, staring at my feet, counting the seconds until the transaction was over and I could be on my way.

But can you relate to that when it comes to your prayer life with God? Sometimes we go to God and we really don’t know what to say. We don’t want it to move beyond the surface so it’s just a matter of time, once we get past the pleasantries, that we’re just staring at our feet, counting the seconds until it’s done and we can be on our way.

That’s what I love so much about the Psalms. They give us the words to say. They give us a vocabulary to use that when we go to prayer they help us to move beyond the surface to have a real and intimate relationship with God. That’s what the Psalms are all about. And that’s what we’re going to be looking at today—how do we get past that point. How do we get past that awkward thing and really get beneath the surface and start to talk about stuff that matters?

So if you have a Bible, where we’re going to be today is Psalms 61, if you have one and you want to go ahead and flip or scroll there. If not don’t worry about it. Everything that I read will be on the screens behind me.

Take a look at this, Psalm, 61. It says, *“O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety, for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.*

So we see right away that the Psalmist here, the author, he’s got a real relationship with God. It says that he’s crying out, that when his heart is overwhelmed he’s crying out to God. And this is some common ground for all of us, no matter if you’re here today and you believe in Jesus, or not, we would say that we know what it is like to be overwhelmed. We find ourselves in that spot pretty frequently. We get overwhelmed and when we do our heart leads us somewhere.

And this is going to be something that we talk about a lot today as we work through this question, but it’s also going to be a question that we look at this week in groups. And if you subscribe to Daily Bible reading the question is going to find its way there. This is where everything is going to start today. It’s with this question:

When your heart is overwhelmed, where does it lead you?

When your heart is overwhelmed, where does it lead you, because the picture we get here of being overwhelmed is almost like being faint. It’s when you’re brought to this spot where you are faint, where you are weak, and you need something to come in and take away this feeling.

And we know about being overwhelmed. There was a study by Barna that they just put out. They said that over 50 percent of all men and women said they raised their hands, “Yes, I have been overwhelmed in the past 30 days.” In the past month alone over 50 percent of the population said, “Yes, I’ve either been physically or mentally overwhelmed.

That’s where we are. And our worlds, they spin faster so we become more overwhelmed to a degree that we’ve never been before. And our hearts lead us somewhere, lead us somewhere to take away the feeling of being overwhelmed. So that’s what I just want to ask. When you feel overwhelmed, where does it lead you?

A lot of us, whenever we’re overwhelmed we look for the opposite reaction. So instead of being overwhelmed we want to be numb, right? We want to be numb to the thing that’s creating everything that is making us overwhelmed. That’s why a lot of us fall to things like a drink, it becomes two or three. Our days are so overwhelming that we just want to get home and if we just have a drink or two, we become numb to it.

Or maybe it’s drugs. It might be something as simple and what seems to be as harmless as Netflix or just binge-watching TV. You just barely make it through... You unlock your door, get into your house, and you just stare at a screen for four hours until you pass out because you just want to escape.

And there's something else just popping up at a rate that we've never seen before, it's self-harm. It's when people get so overwhelmed that they want to escape one feeling so they exchange it for another. And they escape being overwhelmed or being numb for physical pain, even if it just last for a moment, it's still able to take that feeling of being overwhelmed away.

Whether it's healthy or not, we all have found a way to counter-react, combat, this feeling of being overwhelmed. So what is it for you? And I think a lot of us, like I said, what we settle for is an escape. That's what we're looking for. Just a moment, just a second to take us away from the feeling of being overwhelmed.

But the problem with looking for an escape when you're feeling overwhelmed is that it never ends. Because if you've ever escaped before, you know what's overwhelming? Escaping. If you've ever had to escape from something, maybe, I don't know, maybe you've cut school before and as you cut school you have to escape.

Some of you are thinking, "Why would you have to escape from school? We have an open campus. We can just leave whenever we want. Go get lunch, come back." No. In my day you didn't just get to leave whenever you wanted. You had to escape. The doors were locked. Cameras were positioned. There was an officer out there. Some of you are thinking, "That sounds like prison." Exactly. They would beat us if we tried to leave.

You had to figure this thing out. And it never ended. You escaped one problem only to be overwhelmed because once you were out you still had to deal with the phone call. There was still going to be a phone call that was coming to your house on the answering machine. What are you going to do with that?

For those of you who don't know it, answering machine—imagine the voice mail on your phone shared with everyone in your family. You had to deal with it. So you escape one thing only to escape another. You step outside of this feeling just for a moment and it's a never-ending cycle.

That's where a lot of us are living right now. The cycle of just escaping. We feel overwhelmed so we escape, we take a drink. We feel overwhelmed so we eat. We feel overwhelmed so we look at that pornography just for a minute. We feel overwhelmed and we escape by hurting ourselves.

But the thing is, in the route of escaping you never find peace. You never find security. You never really find a clear solution to being overwhelmed. You just barely hang on to fight another day and it just wears you down more and more.

Can you relate to that? I know I can. I've been in cycles where it just feels like I'm barely getting by. But the incredible thing that we see in the Psalms is that there is a solution.

There is something so much better than just making it. There is something so much better than escaping.

That's what it says in Psalm 61 here. It says: No, no, *"Lead me to the towering rock of safety, for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me."*

Right? This is what we are all looking for. Deep down we want to be safe. We want to be protected. We want to know that there is a place that exists where even our enemies can't reach us—a life where we're not constantly looking over our shoulder living and dying by the highs and the lows that come from escaping.

The good news is that because of Jesus we have a place like this. Because of Jesus we don't have to run these escape routes and find these ways out. No, no. We have somewhere we can go. We have a fortress. We have a sanctuary that we can look to.

And that's the picture that we get here when we're looking at this. It's so much more than an escape, it's a home, it's a refuge, it's something strong so that even when you are overwhelmed you can find shelter in God.

And this gives us a description of what that could even look like. Look at this in verse 4. He says, *"Let me live forever in your sanctuary, safe beneath the shelter of your wings!"* Here's that word again. It's safe. And the picture that you get here that the Psalmist uses is being safe beneath the wings of God.

You get this picture of a mother bird protecting her babies. And if you've ever seen this you know that mother birds are some of the most protective beings on the planet. They will do anything; they will give their lives to make sure their kids are protected.

So that's what God is saying. The Psalmist is saying bring me inside your wings. This is my best wing right here [arm held up shoulder high, elbow bent at 90 degrees] I know you've got to use your imagination. But God is saying through the Psalmist that we can come in here and we can find refuge, we can find safety underneath these wings.

Psalm 91 continues with this imagery. It says, *"He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection."*

This is the place to be. Can you imagine that the God of this universe is offering refuge? The God of this universe is saying: No, no, no. You don't have to run. You don't have to escape. Let me be your armor. Let my promises, let what I say about you, let my power be the things that protect you that you could come and find peace there.

This is the incredible thing here when we can find peace and we can rest, because you can't build a life while you're escaping. But if we can find this sanctuary, if we can find this protection underneath the wings of God then everything can begin to change.

Maybe you're thinking, "That sounds great but how do we get there? How do we get to that spot underneath the wings of God?" That's what chapter 62 is all about. Keep reading with me.

It says, *"I wait quietly before God, for my victory comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken.*

So here it is. It says that God is our rock and our salvation. This isn't an either or set up. God wants to be not only our salvation, but he wants to be our rock as well. And I think this is where a lot of the tension comes. This is where a lot of that comes. We don't really feel like we're being protected underneath the wings of God, we really don't have that much to talk about, because if we're being honest, for a lot of us we would say that Jesus is my salvation, but _____ is my rock.

We would say that Jesus is my salvation but _____ is my rock. You fill in the blank.

Let me explain. We would say that Jesus is my salvation meaning, "I've placed my faith in him as my Savior. I believe that Jesus has done everything for me and that because of his finished work on the cross, when I die, I go to heaven. I believe that my salvation is secure." And that is incredible. That takes so much faith to get to that spot, but Jesus wants so much more for us.

I love the way that Aaron said it a little bit back. He said, "I refuse to believe in something that only benefits me when I die." That would be the salvation part. But God takes it a step further and says: No, I don't just want to be your salvation one day, I want to be your rock. I want to be the thing that you build your life on.

And this is when things begin to change. When we don't just look to God for salvation, we don't just say, "Hey, God. Thank you for that house in heaven one day," but we look and say, "No, no, no. There's a fortress that you've given me that I can live in and find security and stability here—you are my rock, Jesus."

But for a lot of us, if we're being honest, there's something else creeping in there. There's something else that we would say, "No, Jesus is my salvation, I believe in him, but this is my rock. This is what I am building my life on. This is the thing that, functionally, I am resting all of my weight on.

And chances are you can connect the dots—it's the thing that is making you feel overwhelmed. It's the thing that is creating the need for an escape, but we don't see it that way. We see it as the thing that is actually providing a little bit of stability, more so than anything else that we've found.

Those rocks, they come in different forms. It might be money. Money might be a rock for you. You believe in Jesus, but you would say, "As long as my bank account is doing okay, then I have security. Then I have peace."

Some of you would say it's a relationship. Some of you would say popularity, and by popularity, I mean your life is built around this idea, "My worth comes from what other people think about me and as long as they think I'm okay, then I'm doing okay." But the problem is that all of these things, they just create more and more room for an escape, because all of these rocks that we try to build our lives on, unless they're Jesus, they are not strong enough to hold the weight of all of us. They are not strong enough so it's only a matter of time before these rocks are overwhelming us, rolling on top of us going down the hill.

What's your rock?

I know for me one of the biggest struggles that I have had in the past that I continue to have about my rock is money. It's just what I saw growing up and what I still see today. And I'm tempted to think if I had more money everything would be okay.

People I run into, situations that I even see, I would think, "Hey, if they just had more money then they would be okay. Then they could escape these fears. Then they would have more options. Then they would have more freedom, if they just had more money.

And I think that is why, seriously, I think that is why I love taking an Uber or a Lyft so much, because it reminds me of the life I thought that I would have with just a bunch of money, like some famous lawyer or business man and I would have some private chauffeur who would just drive me away—away from any problems that I have.

Seriously, you should see me walk to an Uber. I have more confidence than you've ever seen. Don't even try to talk to me, peasants, because I have a car, it is here to take me on my way. Take me away, George.

But what is it for you? What is the thing that you are saying, "As long as I have *this* then it is my rock."?

Don't get me wrong. Money is one of those things, it helps. But maybe more so than anything else it creates this false sense of security. That's why in verse 10 it would go on to say, "*Don't make your living by extortion or put your hope in stealing. And if your wealth increases,*" here it is, "*don't make it the center of your life.*"

Don't make it the center. Don't make it the rock, because it's not strong enough to hold the weight. There is something so much better. Jesus would actually go on to say that when we build our lives on these things, anything that is not this rock that God offers is like building on sand.

And you can build it, but when the storms come, when life hits, when that feeling of being overwhelmed comes over us, everything is going to crumble and then we rush to put everything back together thinking, "The problem was that we didn't have enough of

it.” We just didn’t have enough money, or we just didn’t have enough of this thing can bring us security. But the truth is, there is no amount of it in the world that can provide what we need it to.

But Jesus lays it out here. He says that there is something. There is something and it’s right here. Check Jesus’ words. He says, *“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock.”*

Anyone who listens to my teachings—this is what our whole church model is based on. If you are in a group, you know that every week when we get together it’s this. We open God’s word, we say, “What is God saying to me and how am I going to respond?” Because if we can hold onto those things—his teachings, his promises—that’s where we get to live under the wings. That’s where we get that solid rock that we can build a life on. That’s the spot we go where it doesn’t matter how hard the storms hit, it doesn’t matter the rain, we are going to be okay. We can have safety and security.

But that gap, that gap in what we look to for salvation and what our rock is—I think a lot of times that’s where all of that tension comes from. The gap between... When we say, “This is our salvation, but this, functionally, is the rock that we have,” that’s what creates all of this tension in our prayer life and in our relationship with God. Maybe you can relate.

When we go to pray, we thank God for salvation we thank him for all of the things done, but we like to keep God at a safe distance, almost like a bank teller behind the glass, “God, you stay in heaven. Thank you for salvation. I’m banking on that mansion in heaven one day when I get there, but I’ve got these rocks down here that I can live my life on,” and we don’t want to talk about those.

So we go to God and we pray and we thank him for salvation but it’s only a matter of time before we’re staring at our feet, counting the seconds until the transaction can be done and we can be on our way.

Because what happens when we go to just try to have small talk with God, God never lets it end with small talk. Think about this. When you go to pray and right after you thank God you’re trying to find the words to say. What comes up? It’s those little rocks. Those little rocks that we’re trying to build our lives on. And they seem to make their way to the surface, but instead of talking about them, we don’t say anything. We get silent. We don’t want to share them with God. We don’t want to be that vulnerable.

But hear me. In those moments during prayer when we’re talking to God, when those little rocks that we are trying to build our lives on come to the surface, this is some of the most important and powerful work the Spirit of God is doing. So much is happening here. When we are praying, the Spirit of God is searching our hearts.

And as we're praying thanking God for salvation, the Spirit of God is working in our hearts gathering up all of these rocks that we're trying to build our lives on and he's trying to take them to God and say: Hey, we need to pray about this. We can't build on this. The way that you see money, we can't do anything with this. The way that you see relationships, it's too much, we can't do anything with them. Take them to God. Take them to God.

And in that moment, we have a choice that we can make. We can take these pebbles, these grains of sand that we are trying to build our lives on, and we can exchange them. In that moment, God wants to deal with them, not in a condemning way but in a way—this beautiful exchange of give me those little rocks, give me those things that you are trying to build your life on and let me give you something that is so much better. Let me give you solid ground that you can stand on. Let me give you real protection. Let me give you real safety. Yes! We can celebrate that.

That's what God wants for us. And that's the tension that we have to be able to get through, because once he takes our hand, in those moments when we are praying and he leads us to high ground look at where he leads us.

Psalm 62 again—it says, *"I wait quietly before God, for my victory comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken."*

Can you imagine that? A life that can't be shaken. A life that doesn't have to be rebuilt over and over again. A life outside of the constant chaos of escaping from one thing to the next. That's what Jesus offers. Not just salvation one day. Not just heaven one day, but he provides a way of life, a security that is backed by the Creator of this universe. A foundation that won't move. A rock that won't move.

What we have to do is decide that this is where we want to build. This is where we want to set up camp. We have to stop running. And the fortress he provides—let me make one thing clear—it is not a fortress in some tropical paradise that the reason it works is because it takes you out away from any storms. No, no, no. It's right there in the middle of it.

There is a reason it's a fortress. It's so strong. John 14 says, *"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me."*

The best the world can offer is an escape, it's temporary. It can't give you more than what happens in a moment. You can escape but nothing really changes. But what Jesus offers is unshakeable ground. The storms hit, life crashes, you feel overwhelmed, but you don't have to run, you get to build a life. And it's only possible because of Jesus.

He modeled for us what it looks like to do this. Jesus, the Son of God, left heaven, came to earth for me and you. He lived a life under the wings of God. Under his teaching,

constantly looking to God saying: God what do you want from me? And then he did it perfectly. He took the mission all the way to the end, even to the point when it meant that he would be beaten and he would be sentenced to death. Jesus did all of that for us.

He faced the most overwhelming thing that we would ever go through and he went to that cross to die for me and you and for our sins. And look at the words of Jesus when he gets to that cross. It says, *“At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. At about three o’clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?’”*

Could we stop and think about this for a second. This is Jesus. This the Son of God. This is God. He was with God always, before creation, before time, before the world was created. He had always known refuge. He had always known what it was like to be there with God. But in this moment, he’s abandoned, abandoned so that we would never have to be, abandoned and dying for our sins so that we could live in this kind of protection, so that we could find this kind of shelter underneath the wings of God. He was abandoned for us.

And then shortly after that it said, *“Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit.” He dies, “At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart...”*

And in this moment when Jesus dies, he gives his life for me and you, I want us to hear this:

The earth shook

Rocks broke

Everything that is of the world, everything that we’re trying to build, under the weight of what Jesus was doing, under the power of everything that he did for us, what it took to make this possible, it says the earth shook.

I want you to hear this too. The earth shook:

Jesus didn’t

The earth shook but Jesus didn’t, proving that we can place our trust in him. We can put our faith in him. Not just one day, but he offers a fortress that even when it comes down to death, nothing can take us from him. Jesus proved that, because three days later, after the rocks spit and the curtain tore, Jesus rose.

And that curtain there—that curtain in the sanctuary? What that did is that symbolized the separation between us and God. A separation that had been created because of our

sins, our mess up, none-the-less, there was a gap there. But Jesus, on the cross, removed that curtain and now we have direct access to God. We truly can live under the wings of God. We can find refuge and shelter and protection and safety all because of Jesus. This is where we get to live.

And Jesus said: this is what I want for you. He came and he gave this invitation to everyone. He said: believe in me. Trust in my teachings. And even though the storms will come, and everything will crash against you, you don't have to be overwhelmed because you have a fortress, you're with me. You've got a solid rock that you can build on, built on the love and blood of Jesus. There is no need to run. Stand right where you are.

I love this gift. Look at what Jesus gave us. He said, *"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."*

Man, we just want you to know that if you're here today you can accept that gift. If you're here today and you came in overwhelmed, if you came in here and as we've been talking you just see your mind running to that escape, running to that thing, running to hopefully numb it for just a little bit longer—there is nothing the world can offer it, there's no amount of money, there's no high, there's no relationship, there's no person who can alleviate that, except Jesus.

Jesus said: I will bring this solid rock, I will lift my hand down from heaven and I will raise you up and give you the high ground. That's what we get to accept in Jesus.

And so what we're going to do now, in a minute I'm going to pray and we're going to have a moment of reflection. A moment when we can get real with God. It doesn't have to be long, but just in that moment, what's at the surface right now?

Don't let it stay. Go deep. Get those little rocks that we're trying to build our lives on and take them to God and say, "God, I'm ready. I'm tired of running, tired of escaping." And watch Jesus—this beautiful exchange where he gives us solid rock, where he meets us right where we are and provides us protection and safety.

Pray with me:

God, we thank you. We thank you for the kind of refuge that you offer, the safety that we long for. God, I pray for all of us who are settling for an escape only to wake up the next day more and more overwhelmed. God, I pray that today would be the day where your Spirit meets us.

And, God, we move away from the small talk. We move away from trying to keep the rock and the salvation separate, but God, we come to you, rocks in hand saying, "We're

tired. We don't want to run, we don't want to escape, we want to live in your fortress, in your sanctuary, under your wings.

And, God, I pray today that we would walk out of here on that high ground that you offer—Jesus. In these moments meet us here, Jesus. We love you so much. Thank you for everything that you have done. It's in your perfect name that we pray. Amen.