

Psalm 34: 1-8

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.
O magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together.
I sought the Lord, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him, and be radiant,
so your^[a] faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor soul cried and was heard by the Lord
and was saved from every trouble.
The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him and delivers them.
O taste and see that the Lord is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.

As a part of our ordination requirements Michael and I must participate in several retreat/accountability groups called crucible. We attended our first one of our second year last Thursday and Friday and the theme the worship team focused on throughout was “taste and see” – based on what is said in the first section of the eighth verse of this Psalm. They used this verse as a theme that they continued to highlight throughout the entirety of our time. With this theme in mind, they shared that we must intentionally utilize all our senses to recognize the goodness of God (so much to the point that they had us eating, sniffing, and feeling pieces of chocolate to get the point across). What came to mind, as we were using our many different senses was one of my favorite grounding exercises. God fearfully and wonderfully made each and every one of us and made our bodies for a purpose. Now, this grounding exercise is one utilized by psychologist and counselors alike for those experiencing distress or anxiety; however, I believe, this exercise can also help each of us to realign our focus on God (the whole reason for the midweek pause). So, let’s walk through it together. If you are comfortable place your hand on your chest, feel the rise and fall and pay special attention to the pace of your breath. How you breathe can be a sure indication of where your body is and how your body is reacting to its surroundings. Try to clear your mind of all the things that occupy it – your workday, troubles, the news, what you are doing after this, etc. Think about who God is and what God would want from you in this specific moment. Now, name five things you can see around you. Once you’ve done that, acknowledge four things you can touch. Three things you can hear. Two things you can smell and one thing you can taste. Praise be to God.

Now, this Psalm, Psalm 34, is classified as an individual Hymn of Thanksgiving. Throughout the Psalms there are fifteen total individual hymns of thanksgiving and within them, the psalmists give thanks for their deliverance from various life-threatening situations like, illness, enemies, and danger. Through reading verses one through eight of Psalm 34, readers can identify this same theme. For example, verse four reads, “I

sought the Lord, and [God] answered me and delivered me from all my fears” and verse six says, “This poor soul cried and was heard by the Lord and was saved from every trouble.” Here we see a relationship between deliverance and praise. Biblical scholars believe this is a specific hymn of thanksgiving sung by King David in which he praises God for God’s deliverance from fear and trouble. David then calls upon the people of Israel to remember that their God is both their Protector and Deliverer (v. 7). Then in verse eight, we get a calling out. Within this calling out, David instructs and encourages the people. First, he tells them that they must seek the Lord to know God’s goodness (v. 8a). This is an intentional action that we must all choose to make. We must choose to be in relationship with the Lord, to use our senses to seek and taste God’s goodness. As a result, we find in the second part of verse eight that those who trust in God will be blessed.

I did some research for this devotion – reading many commentaries and other devotions. What surprised me as I did so was this picture-perfect view that was painted of this Psalm – specifically of David. “David struggled, God saved, David lived to share the story.” Let’s be real, David wasn’t perfect, we aren’t perfect and the only human that was, was Jesus. David messed up, a lot. As he struggled, he struggled to be a follower of God, he sinned and stumbled on his journey toward the divine. However, by the end David accepted the consequences of his actions and humbly turned back to God. What does this tell us? This tells us two main things. One, that we are going to mess up. We are going to stumble on our journey; yet, God, does not give up on us. Through our ups and downs, God remains the same. God is still our Protector and Deliverer. This does not mean, we should not work on our relationship with God, but reminds us of the grace that is bestowed on each and every one of us. Second, we must each take on a posture of humility. Just as David accepted his faults and brought them before God, we too must recognize where we fall short and ask for forgiveness for where we went wrong. Doing so grows us closer in our relationship with God and through this relationship we can taste and see that the Lord is good. Thanks be to God, let us pray...

Good, good Father,

Thank you for your continued presence even when we are not perfect, when we mess up and when we stumble on our journey to you. Thank you for continually protecting us and delivering us. There’s a lot in this world that is working against us because of sin’s presence in this life. However, we know that you are stronger, you are greater, and you are more powerful than any force of evil this world may produce. And for that, we thank you. We apologize for where we have fallen short, for where we have not done your will, where we have not loved our neighbor and have not abundantly loved you, oh Lord. Forgive us, free us for joyful obedience. Help us to set our eyes on things above and to taste and see that you are good. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, amen.