

God's Stories for Today
Psalm 91
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St. Michael Lutheran Church
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The pain and sorrow started to wash over me. -

- The weight of it all was more than I could handle in that moment -

- and the tears began to well up in my eyes. - -

- A trickle of tears quickly turned to sobs - -

- and it was then, - -

- that I felt the arms wrap around me - -

- a strong, soft, deep embrace - -

- surrounding me with love and caring and compassion - -

- a strong, soft, loving embrace - -

- that communicated without words - -

- I love you! - -

- I will not leave you! - -

- It will be ok! - -

- I imagine that at different times, -

- all of us have found ourselves in situations like this - -

- found ourselves in a moment - -

- when pain,

- or uncertainty -

- or crisis weighs heavily on our hearts and minds. - -

- And in those moments, -

- there is something powerful

- about the presence of another person - -

- something comforting about knowing

- that you are not alone - -

- something helpful about being surrounded

- with caring and compassion.

- In my moment of pain and sorrow,

- I found refuge, -

- I found shelter, -

- I found strength -

- in those loving arms that surrounded me.

- And the Psalmist

- wants us to know

- that as children of God can always find refuge and strength

- in the arms of our loving God. - -

- For when we live in the shelter of the Lord, - -

- we are surrounded by God's caring and compassion - -

- we are supported and protected

- by the promise of God's presence. - -

- When we live in the shelter of the Lord, -

- when God is our refuge and fortress, -
- then we can face
- trial,
- and loss,
- and struggle - -
- knowing that we are not alone -
- knowing that we have help - -
- knowing ultimately that it will be ok -
- because God is by our side.

- The Psalmist says it this way. -

- “You who live in the shelter of the Most High, . . .
- will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress;
- my God , in whom I trust.’ . . .
- he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from deadly pestilence; . . .
- under his wings you will find refuge;
- his faithfulness is a shield . . .
- You will not fear the terror of the night,
- or the arrow that flies by day . . . “ (Psalm 91:1-5)

- Now I don't know about you,

- but for me those provide extraordinary good news. - -
- We hear the Psalmist basically listing
- every fear or problem

- that the people of his time might face

- and then making it clear that

- God is stronger than any evil - -

- God is greater than any fear - -

- God is victorious. - -

- Which means that - -

- God will be present

- to wrap God's arms around us when we are afraid. - -

- It means that -

- God will take us under God's wing to shelter us

- in times of trial. -

- It means that -

- God will provide us the help we need

- when things are going astray. - -

- In fact,

- just in case we missed it, -

- as the Psalm draws to a close,

- we hear very clearly that God promises to

- deliver us,

- to protect us,

- to answer us,

- to be present with us,

- to rescue and honor us

- and to show us salvation. - -

-As I heard someone once say, -

- God in essence

- promises to hug the world to himself - -

- and make everything ok. - -

- Which is not to say that there won't be problems in the world. - -

- That is not to say that evil won't pop up in unhelpful ways. - -

- That is not to say that we won't experience pain and loss, - -

- because we know that we live in a broken world - -

- and sin, pain and evil are unfortunate realities

- that we all live with each and every day. - -

- No - -

- I think the good news we are being reminded of this morning - -

- is that sin, pain and evil - -

- are not what God wants for God's people, - -

- that sin, pain and evil - -

- will not be ultimately victorious, - -

- and that God is at work in the world

- each and every day - -

- to help us deal with the problems

- sin, pain and evil cause. - -

- God his present

- to wrap God's loving arms around us, -

- to help us to know that we are not alone, -

- to communicate to us,

- in spoke and unspoken ways, -

- the good news

- that we are loved,

- that we are not alone

- and that it will be ok.

- So God might provide comfort

- through the loving arms of a mother,

- or father

- that surround us

- when we are experiencing loss. - -

- or God might provide protection from harm -

- through the willingness

- of faithful people to use their gifts

- to serve and protect others. - -

- or God might provide an answer to our questions

- through a passage of scripture

- or a conversation with a fellow Christian

- or a time of reflection and prayer. - -

- or God might be present with us
 - through a tune of a familiar hymn, -
 - that we sing to ourselves when we are worried, -
 - or be present with us through an individual sitting by a bedside
 - or be present with us
 - through the glory of creation that surrounds us.

- or God might rescue us
 - through the presence of the Holy Spirit -
 - guiding in our decision making.

- or Through the words and witness of Scripture,
 - God might help us to know
 - that no matter how dark or difficult life might seem, -
 - we have share in the hope and promise of salvation
 - thanks to the life, death and resurrection
 - of Jesus our Lord.

- Now I know that
 - so often in this world,
 - people feel lost -
 - people feel hurt -
 - people feel confused. - -
 - So often people long
 - for the assurance that they are not alone - -

- that someone cares - -

- that someone will be present with them. - -

- So often people

- seek to create something

- to surround and protect them,

- But the good news we hear this morning

- is that we need not feel lost -

- for we have a home with God. -

- We need not feel afraid

- for God is our refuge and strength. -

- We need not feel alone

- for God is always with us. - -

- And so I rejoice this morning

- in these words of the Psalmist - -

- who helps us to know

- that when God is our shelter - -

- when we abide in the shadow of the Almighty - -

- when we immerse ourselves in God's Word -

- when we trust

- that God will always keep God's promises

- When we believe that Christ has died,

- Christ is risen,

- and Christ will come again - -

- then we can

- live each and every day -

- with a sense of peace and calm, -

- knowing that even though

- we will have difficult days and moments - -

- even though we will experience pain and loss - -

- even though tears will flow at times

- God will always be present with us

- to shelter us from the storms of life - -

- to guide us safely home

- and to hold us tightly in God's loving arms.