

# “God, You’ve Ignored Me Long Enough!”

## Psalm 13

Today we come to one of the shortest prayers in the Book of Psalms and really instead of a prayer, it is more like a demand for God’s attention. Sure, all the Biblical scholars say that this Psalm is a lament but they also say that it goes way beyond just the usual lament to a demand for a conversation with God.

I invite you to turn in your pew Bibles to Psalm 13.

(Read text)

The funny thing about this Psalm is that after hearing its demands, we will admit that we are just a little uncomfortable with its words, and with its tone. My mom would always tell me, that when I was speaking with people in leadership or figures with authority to please use respect and to watch my tone, because even if I disagreed with them, I’d get more done with honey than with vinegar. Well, I’m not sure the Psalmist’s mother shared the same advice with him. Because when he wrote down these words, he certainly didn’t use respect nor did he watch his tone. Let alone show any reverence to God as he addresses God in this psalm. It really is like he has a bone to pick with God and the gloves are off for this conversation.

As people of faith, while we are reading this Psalm, we almost want to ask the Psalmist what makes him think he can talk to God like that? Doesn't he know better? Didn't his mother raise him better?

And I bet it is safe to say that the psalmist would respond to our questions with this answer: "Because I can!" Now before we go and give the Psalmist a lesson in manners, we have to realize that his response is a good thing! His answer frees us from all the pretenses that we tend to think are a part of our relationship with God. It is a good thing that the psalmist thinks that he can demand things of God, that he can demand God's attention, that he can demand God's care. Believe me, when I say, it is a good thing that we can talk to God like this!

But we need to understand why speaking to God like this is a good thing. We have to understand the psalmist isn't being a spoiled brat. He is just being honest. He is just demanding the things that have already been promised to him, to us by God. He is just demanding the things that God already covenanted to do when God entered into a relationship with the psalmist and with us as people of faith. The psalmist is just holding God to God's word. God promised not to be far away. God promised to care for us. God promised us safety. God promised us attention. God promised to answer when we call. And now as we read Psalm 13, it appears that God is not holding up God's end of the bargain or so it would seem at first glance.

As we talked about last week, we said that God doesn't fix things for us and God certainly doesn't treat us like puppets on a string to be moved about whenever God feels like it. But even we will admit, that even though we know all these things, it does sometimes feel like at times God has abandoned us. It does sometimes feel like God has forgotten all about us and we are left all alone. It does sometimes feel like God is not holding up God's end of the bargain, especially when we keep getting the one two punch combination from life and we find ourselves, face down in the dirt, overcome with troubles. Sometimes, even though we know in our heart and in our heads that God doesn't fix things for us, it does feel like God has forgotten us. And when it just becomes too much, we often do begin to wonder why God has abandoned us in our time of need.

There is a saying attributed to Mother Teresa that captures our feelings during times like these. In response to someone who told her that God doesn't give us more than we can handle, she simply replied, "I wish God didn't like me so much!" Sometimes it does feel like God thinks we can handle a lot because we can get so overloaded with bad news, so overburdened with crisis that we say if we hear one more bad thing, we are not sure what we are going to do. In that moment, when we are the lowest we can go, even we can't help but think that God has abandoned us, has forgotten all about us. We can't help but think we are left all alone.

I hate moments like those. You know, those moments when I feel so helpless, so hopeless, moments when I just want to give up-give up on God, give up on the problem, give up on it all because I just don't have the energy to go on. In those moments when everything I put my trust in seems to fail me, I just get so frustrated and angry. And yes I do wonder why God can let bad things happen.

And while I'm being honest with you, I will also tell you that in those types of moments, I don't want someone to tell me that time heals all wounds. I don't want someone to tell me to get over it. I don't want someone to push me quickly out of my despair because I am making them uncomfortable with my dark mood. It makes me feel like I'm not allowed to have dark thoughts all because they can't handle it. And while I am still being honest with you, I certainly don't like to be told that I should have more faith and then I wouldn't be in such a mood. Let me tell you that is not helpful. Sometimes I just need to be in that dark mood. Sometimes we all just need to be in that dark mood. It can be healing and it's normal to feel that way. It's human nature to get down in the darkness but that doesn't mean I don't have faith. It just means I'm human, that I am broken, that I have reached the end of my rope.

That's what I love about this Psalm. It has six lines but nowhere does it tell us to move on quickly from lament to praise because God can't handle our darkness. Sure I'll admit that it does appear to skip quickly from lament to praise

without much effort. But a whole lot of stuff happens in between the lines. There is a whole lot of behind the scenes drama that we miss if we read this psalm too fast and think it is telling us to get over it. The psalm really does allow us to be in the dark mood and it only moves on from lament to praise after God has completed God's action. It only moves on from despair to hope after God has paid attention to the cries.

As we take another look, we realize that in response to the darkness and problems he is facing, the psalmist doesn't just skip quickly into praise. Nor does he ring his hands and say "Woes is me". And he certainly doesn't give up completely or easily. In response to the darkness, he simply says, "Enough. Okay God, enough. You've ignored me long enough. You've seem to have forgotten me long enough. I'm here. Time to do some of the stuff you promised. Time to something about all this mess that I am in right now. Time for you God to be the God you promised to be."

That's another reason why I love about this psalm. This person isn't stepping aside, waiting for God to fix things. No, this person is dragging God down into the mess with him. And by doing this, the psalmist reminds God that God is not too good to get God's hands dirty once in a while!

Isn't that great!? This person is taking a no nonsense approach with God, not because he expects God to fix things. No he takes this approach because the

psalmist knows that God has a stake in figuring a way of out of the darkness as well. God has a lot on the line in this situation and the psalmist is saying Okay God, now is the time to do your part.

God has a stake in this person's problems. God has a stake in all of our problems. Think about it and listen to why I say that. There are a couple of options that could play out in this scenario. God could just continue to ignore this guy's pleas, walk away and let this guy suffer but really who wants to follow and worship a God like that? Or God could just shrug God's shoulders and say, "I'm powerless to help in this situation. Sorry, you're on your own but once again, who wants to trust and believe in a God like that? Either way, being a person of God doesn't sound like a real good option for us.

Or if we look again at this psalm, we realize that there is a third option. And it is the option that the Psalmist chose and it is the option that has been promised to us that will happen when we as people of faith cry out "Enough!"

God enters into the mess with us. Sure God could walk away. Sure God could continue to ignore us but no. When we cry out "Enough, God, You've ignored me long enough, God gets right down in the darkness with us. Now I will tell you that I believe that God was always right down in the darkness with us but that is another sermon for another day.

God is right there down in the darkness, in the mess with us, because God loves us, because God promised us God would, but also because God has something to prove. That moment, when God is down there in the mess with us, that moment becomes a significant moment because God has to prove to us, to the world, to the doubters and to the haters, in that moment, God has to prove that God will be the God God promised to be.

Just think about that. In that moment of messiness, in moment of darkness, God has to prove to be the God God promised to be, has to prove that God is a God of love, a God of grace, a God of peace. God has to prove God's steadfastness and faithfulness or God will lose. God will lose all that trust, all that belief, and simply become non-essential, non-important to the whole scheme of life.

There's a lot at stake for God. And when we stop and think about it, that is pretty big and a good thing. Sure God loves us but God also has a lot at stake when it comes to the messiness of life. One time of being proved false and it all falls away.

God's very character is on the line and if God doesn't hold true to God's promises, doesn't fulfill those promise, God has broken the covenant with us and we can walk away. We can forget about God, forget about God in our lives. No harm, no foul.

Now, while we all pick our jaws up off the floor because the preacher has just said something outrageous, let me clarify a few things. I did not say that God doesn't come through for us or won't come through for us. What I said was that there is a lot at stake if God ever doesn't come through. And for many people, they think and feel like God has failed them time and time again. They have walked away, ignoring God, forgetting God. They are saying God does not exist, all because of seemingly broken promises on God's part.

There are people within our community for whom this is true. There are people within our circle of friends, within our everyday lives, people that we encounter every day who have walked away from God because they didn't feel like God answered their prayer. They didn't feel like God heard them when they called. They didn't feel like God cared about them at all and they walked away. They are ignoring God just like they feel God ignored them.

We all know people like this. We all know people who have experienced this in their lives. And if we are honest with ourselves, at one point or another, we have all felt the same way as well. We have all felt like God didn't care about us. We have all felt like God wasn't being the God God promised to be. At some point or another, we have all felt like God was ignoring our cries for help and we too may have walked away from it all. Walked away from God, away from faith, away from church, away from all things connected to God, all because God seemingly

broke God's promises to us. But we didn't stay gone. Something brought us back. Maybe we came back because we realized that our prayers were answered, just not in the way we expected them to be. Or maybe we came back because we realized how empty feeling our lives really were without God in them. We may have realized that there was this big gaping hole in our hearts that nothing could fill. Or Maybe we came back because being without God, was like death for us. Without God, we experienced a feeling where there was more darkness, more pain, more nothingness and we just needed the light to break into our hearts once more

Or maybe ultimately we came back to God, to church, to faith because someone finally gave us permission to yell at God, to demand God's attention, to call God out because God wasn't holding to the promises that God made to us. Maybe we finally came back because we had had enough and we wanted some answers.

Now I will warn all of us, that when we demand answers from God, we may not like the answers we get when God replies. Just take a look at Job. When he called God out, God said, basically, I am God and you are not. Not the best answer to Job's problems, but he got God's attention! And that's all we want as well.

When we cry out, "God, You've ignored me long enough. Be the God you promised to be. Prove to this world, prove to me, prove to all the doubters that you really are the Creator, that you really do care, that you really do come when we

call, all we really want is to see God's face. All we really want is to be in the light, the light that drives away the darkness and give us hope. That's what makes it all really worthwhile for us. What makes it right for us again is when we can experience God's healing love in our lives.

And for us to always have that feeling ,we need to remember that even though it seems like God has forgotten us, we have not forgotten God. We need to hold onto the light, to the belief that the lives of those who belong to God matter to God because "nothing in the troubles of life and the experience of the absence of God cancels the privilege of faith to speak directly to God and know, deep down, that we are heard. When we cry out, it is not that we don't have faith. It is because we do that we cry out to our Creator.

As people of faith, We have to realize that yes, it is easy to think of human problems in terms of God forgetting and turning away, and yes, it is risky to involve God in real and imagined threats, but it is more dangerous for faith, for God, for us to consent to the isolation, to believe that the experience of alienation is what God wants for us as God's own children.

In this world as it is, and humanity as it is, we are more likely to experience tears and frustrations as people of faith. And when we are in the darkness, it is not because we don't have faith that we cry out. It is because we do have faith, because we know that God is in the messiness of life with us. We know that a cry for help

only means something when it happens in a created universe. Otherwise, if there is no Creator, what is the good of calling attention to ourselves anyway?

As people of faith, we can move from lament to praise maybe not as quickly as some people would like, and maybe not as quickly as we would like, but we do move in that direction eventually because God has already completed God's action. God has already heard our cries.

God is right down there in the messiness of life with us, because God loves us but also because God has something to prove. God has to prove that God will be the God God promised to be so that the whole world will know that God is a God of God's word, so that the whole world will know that God's steadfast love and faithfulness is for all generations, and for all time. God is faithful. God can be relied on through all the times of our lives, good and bad, because we know deep down the lives of those who belong to God matter to God.

May we always know that when hope despairs, despair hopes even more because God has already heard our cries. Amen.