

Psalms: Summer 2014
Part 6: Resting in God Alone
August 10, 2014

Welcome: It's good to be back with you! Our family spent a few weeks together in the Midwest with Beth's side of the family, which we get to do once every year or two, and it was an incredible time filled with joy and laughter and late nights and far more trips to Starbucks than usual...and it's very good!

Let's go to Psalm 62...

The book of Psalms is filled with raw, gritty, honest, oftentimes passionate dialogue with God! There are very few places in Scripture (especially in the Old Testament), where you can go and in brief sound bites, listen in as ordinary people interact with God through prayer and song and poetry!

So...if you've never read the Bible...or if the Scriptures have become stale for you...or even if your time in Scripture is rich at the moment...the Psalms are a great place to go to encourage you toward honesty and intimacy with God!

My prayer this summer is that some of us will encounter God through His Word for the first time; others for the first time in a long time. And that together, we would encounter God in a way that is personal and transformational!

That's what Psalm 62 is about...waiting on and resting in God!

Psalm 62:1 – *"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."*

The Psalmist says, "I wait quietly before God." Now, let's be honest...if we could just put these first five words of Psalm 62 into practice in our lives...and we would wait quietly before God! And we'd do it again...and again...until we developed the habit of waiting quietly on God...it would change everything!

The truth is that most of us live our lives at such a pace that the last thing any of us want to do is wait for something! If we have to wait in line at the grocery or sit in traffic waiting, or if we have to wait for a promotion at work, or wait to see God's direction for our lives, we often grow anxious and frustrated! **Waiting just doesn't come naturally to most of us, does it!**

If you disagree with me...spend a day with young children! As a father of five, I often see this in my children! If they come to me asking for something...and I simply encourage them to wait, just the thought of waiting can cause the wheels to come off the bus! From an early age we are resistant to waiting!

Furthermore, the Psalmist doesn't just say, *"I wait before God."* He writes, *"I wait quietly before God."*

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And he's not simply talking about eliminating all of the noise around us! He's talking about slowing down our lives and hearts until we are able to be still and rest in God's presence!

Now, if waiting on something or someone is difficult for us...waiting quietly is exponentially more challenging!

Starbucks: I see this every time that I step into Starbucks! At the end of the counter where people gather to wait for their beverage, very few people wait quietly. Most are on their iPhone doing something! I have no idea what they're doing because I'm too busy looking at my iPhone! But...you get my point! We have two free minutes to wait for a Latte, and we feel compelled to fill those two minutes with something!

Why is this? Why is waiting...and waiting quietly so difficult?

New York Times – A couple of years ago, a columnist for the *New York Times* wrote an article in which he took an honest look at our schedule and what that schedule points to. He wrote...

"Almost everyone I know is busy. They feel anxious and guilty when they're not working or doing something to promote their work. The present hysteria is not a necessary or inevitable condition of life. We've chosen it if only by our acquiescence to it. It's not as if anyone wants to live like this anymore than anyone wants to be apart of a traffic jam, or stadium trampling or the hierarchy of cruelty in high school. Busyness serves as a kind of existential reassurance, a hedge against emptiness. Obviously, your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day."

The writer says that we're throwing ourselves at all these different things, and what we're really doing is trying to find rest...trying to find something that will quiet our souls...that will give us peace! And yet the very thing we're pursuing is impossible to achieve because of the pace that we're running!

We are busy, aren't we? Our families are busy...our kids are busy...busyness has become such the norm for many of us that we don't even know why we choose to live this way. As the article says, "we've acquiesced to the busyness." And yet, if we were to ever slow down and quiet our souls...we would be shocked to see what we're missing!

Flight – In the weeks leading up to our vacation, I not only wrapped up my responsibilities here at Harbor and helped coach Brooks' baseball team two or three times a week, but I took a 4-week summer Greek course, which I thought was going

to be easier than taking Greek over an entire semester! My thinking seemed sound until the first day of class, when the professor said to us, *"Now...by being here, I'm going to assume two things. First, everyone knows that you're taking Greek. Second, you've rearranged your schedule to commit 36 hours a week to this class."* I called home, told Beth I didn't think I could cut it...to which she replied, "You've committed to it, I've already prepared the kids for it, you're doing this." **I married well!**

I took the class...passed my final by the grace of God...drove to Syracuse on Saturday to preach for a friend, drove back Sunday evening, packed my bags and got up Monday morning to catch a flight out of Boston.

To make a very long story short...I arrived at the airport an hour and a half early, got to my terminal, and sat down across from our boarding gate to enjoy my Latte and a book that was written in English! At about 7:30, I decided I ought to check on my flight that was scheduled to depart at 7:05. So I approached the gate attendants and asked them... *"What is the status of this flight to Kansas City?"* To which one of them, a very kind and gracious woman, looked at me and said, *"What do you mean?"* I replied... *"The flight to Kansas City...I'm on this flight...when is it scheduled to leave?"* And she said, *"Sir, your flight boarded and left thirty minutes ago...what is your name?"* I told her...then she said...no joke... *"We called your name three times before closing the gate."*

The plane boarded and took off thirty feet from where I sat and I missed the entire thing! And all we can figure out is that I had gone so fast for the previous four weeks, that when I finally sat down to rest...I was virtually asleep! By slowing down, I was finally able to see what I was missing! I'll never live it down!

These might be five of the most difficult words in all of Scripture to apply! But they may also be five of the most important and life changing words in all of Scripture available to us!

I wait quietly before God (repeat that with me!)

It seems that the Psalmist wants nothing more than to be still in the presence of God! It's there that his heart is satisfied and finds rest!

Now...we modernists often have this arrogant notion that up until 100 years ago, before globalization and the invention of mass transit, and before Bill Gates and Steve Jobs came along to both bless and clutter our lives...that life was simpler (this may be true). We mistakenly believe that waiting quietly before the Lord must have been easier then than it is today when waiting quietly is at the very least impractical, if not impossible!

But if you look at verses 3-4, you'll see that this just isn't true!

"So many enemies against one man – all of them trying to kill me. To them I'm just a broken-down wall or a tottering fence. They plan to topple me from my high position. They delight in telling lies about me. They praise me to my face but curse me in their hearts." Psalm 62:3-4

David: The man who wrote Psalm 62 was named David! He was the King of Israel for 40 years. And although we don't know at what point during his life that David wrote this Psalm, we do know that leading up to his reign, his predecessor, King Saul, who saw David as a threat to the throne, hunted David down and tried to kill him repeatedly. For the first ten years of David's reign, his kingdom was plagued by infighting, corruption, and bloodshed. David's own son, Absalom, rebelled, turned many of David's soldiers and commanders against him, and plotted his demise!

When we understand David's life, we begin to see how profound it was for him to say, *"In spite of all the accusations and death threats, rebellion and war, I wait quietly before the Lord."* And we see that all of our excuses for being too busy to wait quietly before the Lord lack weight and substance!

No...there's something far deeper going on inside us that causes us to be resistant to quietly waiting in God's presence!

And it goes back to something that the New York Times columnist wrote...and something we find here in the text! Once again, he wrote...

"(Our) Busyness serves as a kind of existential reassurance, a hedge against emptiness. Obviously, your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day."

He's saying that our busyness isn't a sign of significance (as we've come to see it today), but our busyness is in fact a hedge against our emptiness! We spend our lives running from this thing to that thing hoping to find something that will fill us! Trying to find something that will quiet the haunting voice inside us that says, ***"Something is Missing."***

David recognized this as well...look at verse 9.

"Common people are as worthless as a puff of wind, and the powerful are not what they appear to be. If you weigh them on the scales, together they are lighter than a breath of air. Don't make your living by extortion or put your hope in stealing. And if your wealth increases, don't make it the center of your life."

Psalm 62:9-10

David saw that our human tendency is to run after things that we believe will fill our emptiness, and give us significance, meaning, purpose, and joy!

This is one thing that each of us has in common! We must find something to support the weight of our existence! Something to make life worth living. Something to sustain us through life's ups and downs and enable us to deal with things like uncertainty, criticism, sickness, failure, even death.

And David says...be very careful about what you choose to build your life on...because all of those things that our world says are solid and sound foundations will in fact fail you!

David identifies several of them for us...

People – In verse 9...he warns us against building our lives on common people!

This one is very close to home for me! For much of my life, I've sought after the approval of ordinary people, doing everything I could to keep them happy! It was exhausting and emptying...

I'm convinced that for many of us, seeking the approval of others causes us to run frantically through life...

Family: Some of you have spent your entire life trying to keep your family or friends happy? Trying to make sure they see you in a certain way? The thought of disappointing or not meeting their expectations is a crushing thought, isn't it? So you run at break-neck speed to earn their approval, and there's no rest.

Parents: Moms...if I could speak gently and honestly for a moment, and I acknowledge that I'm not a mom, but I'm married to one (and in a moment I'll speak to men)! Moms, some of you are living to keep your kids happy! You'll do anything...you'll run anywhere...at any speed to keep a smile on their face! And the thought of them being dissatisfied or disappointed in a decision you make haunts you, doesn't it? So...you rarely say no...and your family calendar fills...and any margin for things that bring you and your family true rest and joy and connection goes away, and before long you're running on fumes, emotionally and physically exhausted. Isn't this true! Without realizing it, you've built your life on their happiness, and yet, there's no rest...and the joy goes away!

Power – Then, David warns us against building our lives on power! There are two primary ways that most people today tend to pursue power...through beauty and wealth!

Beauty: Last year in the Boston Globe, columnist Ruth Graham wrote a stunning article entitled ***The Beauty Bias***, in which she explained why she believes that ***“Life is good for beautiful people.”*** She writes...

“Research over the past decades has found that attractive people earn more than their average-looking peers, are more likely to be given loans by banks, and are less likely to be convicted by a jury. Voters prefer better-looking candidates; students prefer better-looking professors, and teachers prefer better-looking students. Study after study has shown that we judge attractive people to be healthier, friendlier, more intelligent, and more competent than the rest of us, regardless of whether it is actually true!

In short, she’s saying that our culture teaches us that beauty provides us with an upper hand in life. There is even an entire beauty industry that teaches our young women that they’ll be valuable when they’re beautiful! As a result, many young women spend their lives pursuing beauty...and many young men spend their lives pursuing the beautiful! Both of them think, *“If I can only get beauty, I’ll be something.”*

But if that’s true of you...you’ll never rest...because what happens to physical beauty? It gets wrinkles and sags!

Wealth: Finally, David says in verse 10 that if it’s not beauty, it’s wealth!

Lifestyle: Many of us spend our lives pursuing a certain kind of lifestyle in hopes that it will satisfy us! Men...can I encourage you here! There is a tendency for us to spend our lives pursuing career, position, and power because we believe that those things are what make us men! That if we finally get power and position, we’ll be something! But if this is true of you, you’re building the weight of your life on something that will not sustain you, and meanwhile everything important (marriage, children, community) will fall apart around you.

Please hear me...there is nothing wrong with family, friends, children, work, position, influence, money! All of those can be wonderful gifts from God, but they make terrible foundations! They’ll never sustain you! The moment you try to rest in those things, they will frustrate and exhaust you!

Scales – That’s why David writes... ***“If you weigh them on the scales, together they are lighter than a breath of air.”***

Will you try something with me? Put your hands like this! Let's do that!
Now...breathe out. How much does that weigh?

David's point is this. Many of us are building the foundations of our lives on something that is so small and inconsequential in comparison to what we were created for!

You were created to rest and delight and be satisfied in the presence of God! In his glory...and unfailing love...and indescribable beauty and power! Sin is to turn away from God and attempt to find meaning and satisfaction in all those other things...people, power, and possessions.

David says...there is only one foundation that will support you...that won't let you fall! Notice the imagery David uses to describe God in verses 5-7.

"Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me." Psalm 62:5-7

God is our rock, our fortress, and refuge! When this truth about God makes its way into your heart, it will enable you to rest!

Kids – Every night, when I put my kids to bed...among all the things we pray for, I always pray one thing...and if I don't pray this, my kids won't let me leave the room! I pray, *"God, please give my kids good dreams and no bad dreams...and fill their hearts and our home with your peace."*

Now...a few nights ago, Elise, who is seven, shared with me that she's been concerned at night that her bunk bed is going to crash down through the house. So...I shared with her about this verse...that God is our rock and when we trust in Him, He's strong enough to keep our bunk beds from falling! You might be saying, that's a nice thought...but how do we know that God is worthy of our lives? How do we know that He is strong enough to keep us from falling, and that if we rest in Him, He'll satisfy our deepest desires?

Gospel – To answer this question, you have to look at what God has already done for you through His Son. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, had power and beauty and strength and position! And yet he gave it all up to come into our world as a man...to live a life of complete loyalty to the Father, and to die for the unlovely! He

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was rejected and betrayed by His closest friends. He was unjustly condemned to die! He was nailed to a cross between two thieves!

And he did it for you and me! Jesus took our sin, and the penalty we deserved to bring us into the eternal love of our Heavenly Father! Jesus suffered to give us rest! And three days later God raised Jesus from the dead, giving us confidence that He holds power over sin and death!

Now...because of Christ, we can enjoy the gifts of God knowing that even if all that we have is taken away, there is ONE who will never go away! His name is Jesus! And until you rest in Him...you will forever be restless.

Which is why David writes...

"O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge." Psalm 62:8

Have you responded to the gospel? Have you placed the trust of your heart in Jesus and turned your whole life over to Him? **How do I know?** Are you resting in Him? Is your life marked by peace or anxiety? Is there a deep residing joy and confidence in your heart in spite of what life throws at you, or is there exhausting and a sense of emptiness?

If you've never responded personally to Jesus, today can be that day! If you've been around the church your whole life and yet you've never known Jesus personally...you've never rested in Him, respond to Him today!

Psalm 62 is an invitation to rest in the arms of our Creator!

And we rest in God when we begin to practice these five words!

I wait quietly before God

Application

As we close...I want to give you one way to put this into action in the week ahead!

Calendar: We've made available a wonderful resource to help you wait quietly before God throughout the summer. If you haven't gotten one of our summer calendars, get one in the cafe. There are times when we give you a resource, and then we don't do a great job of equipping you to use that resource...

Describe three columns! **Inspiration, Explanation, Application! This week, describe how you are going to practice waiting quietly on God!**

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Here's the deal...don't become frustrated if you are met with silence (we don't like to wait), or if a million things begin to race through your mind. You might go to wait on God and fall asleep...I did as my plane was boarding. That's ok...God isn't pleased with you because you're always consistent or good...He's pleased with you in the same way that a Father longs is pleased simply by holding his child in his arms.

He longs to meet you as you wait quietly before Him!

Wait quietly before God...and do it again...and again...and again! Let the truth of the gospel wash over your heart again and again, and you will begin to rest in Him!

Pray!