

The Rock: 06-28-2021**First reading: Bonhoeffer quote (No Rusty Swords)****Title:** Don't worry (fret)**Scripture:** Psalm 37:1-11**Theme:**

In all of the troubles the world has, we are challenged to fret not, to look to God and trust Him. He will not leave us or forsake us.

Introduction:

I have an opportunity that doesn't come too often, and that is a "down week" between sermon series. As I was prayerful about what to do, I felt it would be good to do just a one off.

Not that it would be less focused or important, but rather take a weekend to breath, focus and reflect. Reflect on where we are, and what is going on, at least in the sense of anxiety and worry.

I keep thinking of Esther and the challenge given to her by Malachi, that says:

-Esther 4:14b ESV

"...who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Reflecting back to this Psalm and the last time I preached from it, as this isn't the first, and probably not the last time. The stories, and the issues of our country and world have continued to become as divisive as they are troublesome.

Many in the church are concerned over the long-term effect on our religious rights and freedoms, and rightly so. Yet, Matt Chandler said it so well, and perhaps that's why I am reminded of Esther.

"The Church is made for this." This is the time for us to shine, to make much of Jesus and show the world that there is a better way.

Yet, at the same time, we are wrestling with the fact that the world continues to rebel against God. But we also know that the promises of God tell us that in Jesus all of this has already been fixed.

But we live in the middle of those two advents right now. The ascent of Jesus and His promised return. Because of that, there is this dynamic tension of the now, but not quite yet that leaves us with anxiety at times.

N. T. Wright speaks of this in his book: The Case for the Psalms. It's dealing with the contradiction of the now / not yet of God's promises.

Yes, Jesus has defeated evil and wickedness through the cross and his resurrection, and yet there is still real evil in this world which we face every day.

At times it seems to win the day as we watch violence play out against the most helpless among us. The poor, the needy, the widow and the unborn. People still destroy not only God's creation, but his image bearers, and seem to be quite ok with that.

So, wrestling with the now / not yet of God and His world as well as His promises is nothing new. In fact, these are the very things which David was wrestling with as he wrote Psalm 37.

The Story:

In reading it, this is not a petition to God. David, in this Psalm is giving instruction to humanity about God, eternity and how we are to function and trust HIM in the midst of a world where it seems clear, evil is winning the day.

It's a long Psalm with a lot in it, but I want to focus mainly on the first eleven

verses this morning. I want us to discover how we are to trust God even when it looks futile.

I want us to understand that being meek is not being weak, rather it is something much different. But that's for the end.

David says:

-Psalm 37:1-2 ESV

"Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb."

Fret is not a word we hear too much anymore. It's right up there with being vexed. Another fun word to just throw out there every once in a while.

David opens this poem with the challenge to not worry. Literally it means: Do not get heated about these things.

When I used to watch the news or anything political, I tended to get a bit worked up. Well ok, I still do actually. The older I get, the more I discover that the reason behind this is this: helplessness.

That deep seeded feeling that I can't do anything about what I am seeing or hearing and as a result I get angry.

I watch people do wrong, speak blatant lies and convince the audience that they are right all at the cost of another.

It's frustrating. Discovering I can do nothing about it always causes the question: Why do you allow this God? When are you going to do something about it?

This is the very thing David is tackling here - yet he throws out a different perspective for us. One that contradicts how we are naturally inclined to act.

In fact, we discover as we read what he writes that our response is a direct link to whom and how we trust. It is very revealing actually.

We shouldn't get all worked up about those who are evil and do evil. Why? Because in the eternal grand scheme of things they are passing away.

It doesn't matter what is happening in the moment, they will be judged and ultimately like the grass die and fade away.

What they are doing is all focused on the here and now. They are not building anything of eternal lasting value.

People who live and act this way show that they are trusting in themselves and

their motives to survive and get what they want.

Not so with us, David says. Rather as those who trust in God we are to respond and live differently. I am in no way saying that we are not to take action and speak up. We should. That's not what I am addressing here. I'm addressing our hearts and who we are trusting in the process.

Is it ourselves and the systems here in our culture and country, or is it the Lord?

So, starting in verse 3, David says:

-Psalm 37:3-6 ESV

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday."

I'm not going to lie; I struggle in this area. My upbringing being what it was, I constantly have to fight the urge of trusting in myself, especially when things don't go as planned.

At those moments I have to remember to make a decision against myself and step into the truth of the Scriptures. Identifying that I am one who is not inclined to easily trust, even as God proves himself time and again.

But that is the tough truth of Scripture. Many times, I hear that trusting in a God you can't see, especially when the world looks as it does - is nothing more than delusion. An escapist mentality that tries to avoid the harsh realities of life.

Yet that is not at all what David is implying here. In fact, it's just the opposite.

We find in this Psalm a Scriptural truth: That while the Bible brings us comfort always, it also introduces complications for us if and when we truly live it out in this world.

To trust the LORD and do good, to delight ourselves in Him, all in the face of how our world looks actually causes more problems as we attempt to walk it out. People mock, ridicule and think we're nuts.

Do not fret, do not get heated about this stuff. Instead, trust, commit and

delight. As Christians, don't think for a minute that we don't struggle with this.

In just a short ten minutes on YouTube and social media I can see, hear and watch "Christian" people lashing out, demanding their guaranteed rights to do as they wish. Acting much like the zealots of Jesus' day.

Now, again, I am not saying that we just take what the world demands without speaking out against injustice and evil.

What I am saying is that how we are doing it is a reflection of who we really trust. We must speak out against the evil in the world, but doing so in such a way that drives people to Jesus, not away from Him.

David goes on to tell us that when we are challenged in these moments, instead of going on the offensive, we are to do something against human nature, BE STILL:

-Psalm 37:7-9 ESV

"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who

wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.”

Be still, exercise patience, and don't fret. I don't have time for that! Something has to be done. We have to take action, speak out, march in protest, something!

Wrong. These are all focused on our space and time rather than God's eternity. We are all guilty of it at one time or another. We miss God's grand plan and story of salvation (helping people encounter Jesus) when we become too busy trying to fix things ourselves.

Now I hate and love these verses. Love them because they are pregnant with the hope of God's redemption. I hate them because it shows me at times how and who I trust by the way in which I respond.

Listen, AGAIN, I am not saying here that we never do anything, but, if we can't be still before the LORD because we feel we have to be doing something, where is our trust placed?

If we are impatient with the speed at which things are progressing and feel we need to motivate things along, who are we trusting?

If we fret or get all heated about those who do wrong and yet are glorified and

successful, who are we trusting? Upon what is our focus?

You see how David has written this? If we aren't still before God and waiting patiently for him to speak and act-we will always fret. So, you don't want to fret, get angry or worry.

Instead, be still, wait with patience. It only makes logical sense. So why do we struggle with this so much? PRIDE!

We are human beings in need of a savior and we wrestle with our desire to defend ourselves in the midst of evil. We aren't still, we aren't patient and we worry.

David tells his readers to relax. From the perspective of eternity God has this under control. Looking at verses 10:

-Psalm 37:10 ESV

"In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there."

"Listen, stop getting so worked up folks." That's what David is saying here. In a little while God will handle these people who are taking what isn't theirs, mistreating those they shouldn't and laughing in the face of justice, calling good evil, and evil good - thinking they have gotten away with something.

Paul echoes this thought when he encourages the church in Rome:

-Romans 12:19-21 ESV

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Again, do you see how sometimes the Bible presents problems for us? We are called to respond in ways which are good and right, but usually end up with being continually mistreated or misunderstood.

So, which will we choose? To do things our way, using the mechanisms of the world, or be still, listen to the Lord and THEN proceed forward as He would desire us to?

Learning to live within that tension is a difficult thing to do. Especially given the tough issues of our time, we have to learn to trust God and His word, and follow His way of handling things.

That tension of the now / not yet of God's promises where we may not have the answers but we are called to trust.

King David doesn't leave us without a final answer, any more than Paul did:

-Psalm 37:11 ESV

"But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace."

That is a very familiar statement. Derek Kinder says this regarding verse 11:

"The context [verses 1-10] gives the best possible definition of the meek: they are those who choose the way of patient faith instead of self-assertion."...The point of verse 11 is that the wicked who have taken more than their share, will be destroyed in the end, leaving the meek in sole possession...but our Lord put this promise into a large setting: by a similar judgement the meek will inherit, not the land only, but the Earth.

-Kinder TOTC Pg. 150

Looking at Matthew 5, Jesus not only says this, but in His ministry walked this very thing out. Showing to us that it can be and should be done:

-Matthew 5:5 ESV

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Patient faith, not self-assertion.
Trusting in the Lord means trusting that

his covenantal promises are true. Even when the here and now looks as though evil is prevailing, God will be faithful to fulfill his covenantal promises.

The meek will inherit the Earth, Jesus said. God's covenant promise is for the nations. The writer of Psalm 2 says this:

-Psalm 2:8 ESV

"Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession."

Trust me and I will take care of it. Even if the whole world is unfaithful, I will not be. I will fulfill my covenant with my people and all the world will know.

A couple weeks ago I quoted M-LJ about pleading the promises of God in your prayers. Verse 11 is another one of those promises.

In the now / not yet of the world we live in, pray that promise. Plead before the LORD that He will help us not only to trust and not fret and worry, but also to pray for the nations, the whole earth.

That the meek will inherit, not the bully, the big mouth bragging king or president or prime minister. Not the one with the biggest gun or the most money.

Rather, led by a lowly carpenter King, a shepherd from the forsaken place of Nazareth, the world will be fully healed and restored.

We live in difficult times, but they are our times. God has set us down and placed us in the here and now.

Because He doesn't make mistakes, we can trust that not only were we as individuals born for such a time as this, the Church is made for this.

We are not called to hide away, or fight the way the world does, but rather we are called to go out into all the world and preach the good news.

That Jesus came, lived, was crucified, buried and on the third day rose. He ascended to heaven and will return from there.

In His coming the first time, He gave His life as the perfect sacrifice, taking my sin and your sin away by His blood. All we have to do is accept that, begin to walk in that and trust Him.

This Psalm points to Jesus. How? David reminds us that the wicked will be brought to justice on that day. All of the things we fret about and concern about will be fixed, actually have been fixed.

It all happened because of Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. In Him we are forgiven, redeemed, restored, and sent out into the world.

Do you know Jesus? If you don't, I want to challenge you and encourage you today to look to Him. He is the only answer to all of life's worries.

While He may not take us away from it all, He is able to make us stand through it all. Come to Him today.