

Welcome & Announcements

Welcome to community group! We believe that people come to faith and grow in their faith when they get to spend time reflecting on God's Word, and also spending time with other Christians. That's what we're hoping for tonight. Here's what's happening in the broader life of the church:

• Change of Meeting Schedule

As I'm sure you've heard we have changed our typical practice of meeting in large groups, particularly for Sunday morning worship, in light of the current events. At least through Sunday, March 22nd we will not be gathering in large groups on Sunday morning but rather as families/small groups to worship.

Since we will not be celebrating the Lord's Supper in our "house church" worship gatherings nor here in our community groups, and since we believe the Lord's Supper is a beautiful and important means of grace, we will have brief (30-40 minute) smaller group worship gatherings on Tuesdays 7a, and Wednesdays and Fridays at noon.

You're likely tired of hearing this things but as a friendly ad nauseam reminder:

- **If you are ill with viral symptoms (i.e. fever, runny nose, sneezing, coughing, etc.), please refrain from coming to our meeting** (house church worship or community group). The wise course of action is to stay at home until you are well.
- Please wash hands with soap upon arrival in the bathroom/kitchen.
- We want to be and remain a warm and welcoming church. However, for the time being try to avoid physical contact. Wave, smile, be ready to visit, but we will try to keep space to ourselves.
- We will try and have plenty of chairs and space available for our discussion so people can sit at least 3 feet apart from one another. If you are vulnerable to this virus (if you are over 60 years old, if you have an impaired immune system, or if you have a serious medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, etc.), **please use wisdom in your participation in church gatherings**. If you're unable to join us, know your presence will be missed.

• Easter Weekend

Easter weekend will be here before we know it! And we're hoping and praying that we'll be all clear to gather on Good Friday for worship at 6:30p, then gather for a pancake brunch and egg hunt on Saturday at 10a, and then for worship as usual 9a and 10:45a Easter Sunday!

• Men's Retreat | April 24th-25th

Gentlemen...early bird registration *ends March 20th* for our annual Men's Retreat @ Higher Ground so sign up today via the Church Center App! Our speaker this year is pastor and author Mike Khandjian from Chapelgate Church in Baltimore.

Praying Our Troubles

(Psalm 3)

OPENER

We are taking a little break from our “Signs” sermon series as this week presented a LOT of unprecedented stuff. We’re going to be looking at Psalm 3. The Psalms have been called “the prayer book of the Bible” because they give us the verbiage of pray, teaching us to pray in ways we might not have realized were okay and good, taking us to areas of prayer we might never have gone. And right now we all could use some encouragement on how to pray, especially how to pray our troubles.

Open up with a prayer toward that end: gives us minds and hearts open and eager to learn how to pray. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear, giving thanks for the community God has given us to grow in, asking for encouragement amongst one another, and for God to be honored, etc.

STUDY/DISCUSSION

This week we’re taking a detour from the gospel of John and looking Psalm 3.

>> READ >> Psalm 3

1. Reading this psalm, what immediately stands out to you? What is interesting? Anything challenging? Confusing? Encouraging? Provocative? What questions does it raise for you?
2. We may not experience the attack of foes as David speaks of here (see: 2 Samuel 15-18 in which Absalom, David’s son, had led a coup to overthrow David as king forcing David to flee into the wilderness for his life). So although we may not have *physical* enemies who are attacking as Absalom was attacking David, in what ways have you experienced “attack” or accusation in your life; either in the past or maybe even currently?
3. What comfort might it bring if we thought of God as our “shield” as David does here? (The shield is a military metaphor that may be somewhat distant to us, but think of a full length shield or a strong shelter).
4. Does knowing God is our shield mean we will never have trouble or be free from suffering? Why or why not? (see: John 16.32-33; Isaiah 43.1-2)
5. Verse 5 tells us that David lied down and slept *even in the midst of being pursued by his son who intended to kill him*. And then verse 7 says he will not fear. Where does David get this kind of peace? How can we experience this kind of peace based on this Psalm?
6. The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Philippian church: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4.6-7) David seems to be living out this verse: praying his troubles and experiencing God’s peace. What might this look like in *our* lives particularly right now with our current extraordinary global circumstances? What are some of your “troubles” that you could pray?

7. What is one way your faith can grow in light of what we've discussed? What is one thing you can do to live out the idea of *praying our troubles*? How can this discussion be a blessing to those around us? (As Scott Sauls says: "Wash hands for sure; then wash feet")
8. What needs do we have among our group? Is everyone okay? How can we help each other? Are there friends or neighbors or co-workers who need anything that we could help with?

PRAY

Take some time and pray together. Praying of our troubles would be quite appropriate. And prayers for people we know who are struggling or vulnerable.

LEADER'S NOTES

We use the word *faith* in a variety of ways in our culture. Faith is a name. Some people used it as a synonym for religion (“So and so is of the Muslim faith”). Some people tell us when we’re in a difficult time to “just keep the faith” (without specifying in what). There is such a thing as inauthentic faith, or misdirected faith — the warnings in the New Testament should so challenge us in that regard. John the Apostle writes about faith (or belief and believing) 3x more than the other Gospel writers. And our text this week really centers on the notion of real faith.

1.) *The Surprising Recipients of Faith (v.39-45)* — Samaritans and Jews reacted to each other with great animosity. How surprising, then, when John records the Samaritans warmly believing in Jesus. Later in the story, the royal official has real faith, though he’s almost certainly a Gentile, and is working for the occupying Roman Empire. Contrast, the equally surprising resistance of the covenant community — “a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.” This teaches us that God has an eye for the outsider, and so should we. Rebecca McLaughlin tweeted — “1.) An alone person in our gathering is an emergency. 2.) Friends can wait. 3.) Introduce a newcomer to someone else. Let’s all be missionaries at church today.”

It also warns those of us inside the church, to beware of merely going through the motions. It’s possible to be around Jesus without really trusting him.

The Samaritans also made a bold confession — “We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” This would have been a dangerous statement, as Roman emperors took unto themselves the title “the savior of the world.” In an election year, it’s important that we not pour our hopes and dreams and fears into a political outcome.

2.) *The Journey of Faith (v.46-54)* — Many of the ancient commentators saw the royal official as a paradigm for the way faith plays out in our own lives. a.) *Faith has a Beginning (v.46-47)*. And it very often begins in the midst of a great need. Troubles and suffering don’t create our need, so much as surface it. Before his son was ill, would the royal official have walked 15 minutes to see Jesus, let alone 15 miles? Faith often begins in hardship. b.) *Faith’s Perseverance (v.48-50)*. The royal official doesn’t get the response immediately that he was hoping for. But he hangs in there, and asks Jesus again. Then Jesus makes a promise, and before the official sees the result, he takes Jesus at his word. Real faith involves trust in Jesus. c.) *Faith’s Growth (v.51-54)*. He goes home and then when he sees his son has been healed, he believes. He believed before, but now that he has seen Jesus at work, his faith grows. The royal official would go on to deal with more suffering in his life. But now he had a sign to return. “Real faith is going back to what we know about Jesus, and then extrapolating out to the things we don’t know” (David Bisgrove). We have an even better sign, the death and resurrection of Christ. We need to constantly return to that in order to deal with the challenges we face.