**December 24, 2023 Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26**

 ***Peace***

**Scripture:***Psalms 89:1-26 NRSV*

 *(1)I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. (2)I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. (3)You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: (4)'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.'" … (19)Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people. (20)I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him; (21)my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. (22)The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. (23)I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. (24)My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted. (25)I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. (26)He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'*

**Notes:**

1. Did God come for***me***?
	1. Failure to see God as a loving ***father*** is the root of destructive thinking.
	2. God pours out His love onto the world in ***Jesus***.
2. King David’s legacy is***complex****.*
	1. David will repent of his sins; God is faithful to ***forgive***.
	2. Jesus is ***descended*** from King David
3. The steadfast love of God shows up in the***mess****.*
	1. This psalm indicates a desire for ***repentance***.
	2. God did ***hear*** and respond by sending Jesus.
	3. God loves us where we are and wants to bring us ***peace***.
4. The Prince of***Peace***is born into mess*.*
	1. Mary’s choice to obey God had real ***consequences***.
	2. Redemption comes in ***vulnerable*** ways to ***vulnerable*** people.
	3. Christ comes to bring ***peace*** and wholeness.
5. Where is the ***love*** of God here and now?
	1. Look to the ***light*** of the Lord.
	2. Look at the ***love*** that we share with one another.
	3. Look to the ***Joy*** this season brings

**Script:**

Today we come to the end of our journey of Advent. Each year during the weeks leading to Christmas, I run through a gambit of emotions, some of them are joyous, others are sad, and then there are others that are somewhere in between. Is it any wonder that depression rises during the holiday season? I become confused that while we sing this is the most wonderful time of the year, and yet we struggle with our emotional wellbeing.

Each one of us here this morning has expectations of the perfect Christmas. Clark W Griswald is not the only dreamer when it comes to Christmas. There is a little of Clark in each of us. Perhaps that is why the Christmas Vacation movie is so popular each year. Many of us are seeking the nostalgia of the Christmases we experienced as children, the favorite memories we have of years gone by, and you would like to see these memories relived each and every year to come. In your minds you have set expectations, whether realistic or idealistic; when the events of Christmas take place, we either find ourselves dealing with emotions of exhilaration or disappointment.

However, today we will look at the life of King David. In our passage today found in Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26. We will learn that the promises found in scripture are there to give us hope. They are there to give us confidence. They are there to remind each of us that the Lord is with us in our most joyous moments, and when we are in our deepest despair. Stand and join me as we read the sermon passage found in Psalms 89.

*Psalms 89:1-26 NRSV (1)I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. (2)I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. (3)You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: (4)'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.'" … (19)Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people. (20)I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him; (21)my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. (22)The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. (23)I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. (24)My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted. (25)I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. (26)He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'*

We sometimes struggle with whether the love of God is big enough for us. Even here on this day before Christmas, on this Christmas Eve, we might look at the story of a God who came as a baby and think, “*That’s great, but God didn’t come for me. I am too broken/too messed up/too much for God. Did God come for me?”* Our inability to believe in the expansive love of God; our failure to see God for the loving father that he is; is the root of a lot of destructive thinking and theology, in our individual lives and also, in the church as a whole. That is right, our failure to see God as our loving father is the root of destructive thinking.

Yet here we are, on this last Sunday of Advent, with a psalm that once again focuses on the steadfast love, the faithfulness, of God. The psalmist uses King David as an example of that steadfast love. This psalm of lament points to the promise made to David but also alludes to David’s failures. This psalm is a reminder that, even in the mess of David’s life, God was still faithful to him.

We know that God does remember His people. We know that God is still faithful because, as we gather to celebrate the final Sunday of Advent on Christmas Eve, we know that the Messiah is born from the line of David—the ultimate illustration of the steadfast love of God for all, for you, and for me. We must know that though we may not be worthy of his love, grace, and mercy; God pours out His love onto the world in the form of his son Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. In the arrival of the baby Jesus, God comes to live with each of us in flesh and blood. Today, King David is the example being presented to us.

What can we learn from King David? *King David’s legacy is complex.* David became king over Israel following God’s rejection of King Saul. Some would say that Saul had become too big for his own britches. He had believed that he was capable of doing things on his own, and did not need the Lord to guide him and protect him. Saul had become unrighteous.

But King David is remembered as one of Israel’s greatest kings, even though one of his most memorable and yet notorious acts as king was abusing his power by seducing Bathsheba; and then to cover his own indiscretions, having her husband, Uriah, sent to the heaviest fighting in battle where he was sure to be killed. All this to cover up his crime.

David knows what he did was wrong, he knows his sin and will later repent of these sins, and God is faithful to forgive him. The Bible later calls David a man after God’s own heart. The opening chapter of the gospel of Matthew provides the family lineage of Jesus, calling Jesus “the son of David” in the very first verse, and then going on to show how Jesus is descended from King David through Solomon, who was the son of David and Bathsheba. Bathsheba is one of four women named in this lineage She is identified as “the wife of Uriah,” this is a direct reminder to the original hearers of David’s sin against Bathsheba and Uriah.

*The steadfast love of God shows up in the mess.* Psalm 89 is another psalm of lament. The people sing of the faithfulness, the steadfast love, of God in the past, and of the promises of God toward the descendants of King David, but they also sing of despair. How long will God be hidden? How long will God be angry? Where is the former great love of God? Remember us!

While a response from God to their lament isn’t found here in the text, we see as we remember forward this Advent, that God does remember them. This psalm is honest about sin and unfaithfulness, It indicates a desire for repentance. This story is messy and full of brokenness and despair.

We remember forward, We must know that God did hear them and did respond by sending Jesus through the line of David and Bathsheba. This is the redemptive story: where once sin and brokenness sought to destroy, God continued to be faithful and ultimately brought about salvation through this messy, broken lineage. We can trust as well that, no matter our past or even our broken present, God’s steadfast love is for us.

If God can take this broken life of David and ultimately bring about redemption for the whole world, what can God do with our brokenness when we repent and lay our lives before Jesus? God loves us where we are and wants to bring us peace and wholeness.

*The Prince of Peace is born into mess.* Mary was a real person, She was young and likely scared. Without God’s blessing and protection Mary could have been killed for carrying this child. We sometimes forget the messy reality of these moments. Mary’s choice to obey God and bear the Christ had real consequences. Christ was born into vulnerability. The incarnation story is *messy*.

Nothing looks how we would expect it to. The story of the world’s redemption comes through real people, into messy stories, and in vulnerable ways to vulnerable people. Christ comes to bring peace—*shalom*, to bring wholeness. He seeks to heal the brokenness, to forgive the sin, and to move people away from the chaos that is made from sin and death, he is at work to bring peace and comfort. This is a story for us. Where is there brokenness and sin that needs to be repented of. Repented so we can find the wholeness and healing of Christ? What legacies will those coming after us be part of because of the faithfulness of God toward us?

Where is God? Where is the love of God here and now? When we look back in order to look forward, we see that God is here, *Immanuel*, in the midst of our vulnerabilities, in the midst of our messes, in the midst of the sin done to us and also the sin we have done. God longs to draw near. The Prince of Peace longs to come, even now, once again, to bring renewed hope into our lives. We can sing with confidence, “Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in” because God’s love is steadfast for us, even now.

What emotions are you experiencing this Advent Season? As you listen to the music, as you look at all of the lights, do you feel the joy of the Lord or are you struggling with disappointment, are you struggling with depressing thoughts and emotions? I was made aware this week that I was acting in a way that was less than appealing; and as I dealt with this statement I had to wonder why? Why was I seemingly being rude and short with the people I am closest to? Why am I not enjoying the preparation of Christmas; and the answer is simple: I am looking in the wrong places. I am looking to the materialistic Christmases of past years. I was looking for the ones who are no longer with us this Christmas, and I am missing them.

What we should be looking to is the hope of this coming Christmas and all future Christmases until the Lord returns. Looking to the light of the Lord, that shines throughout the whole year. The light that shines especially bright during advent and Christmas, looking to the love that we share with one another during this season. A love that brought God to humanity in the form of an infant, and a love that will urge His return someday soon as Jesus returns. We should be looking at the Joy this season brings as we see our children getting excited for Christmas morning; as we see the smiles on people’s faces as we share with them; as we share a meal, a little time, a Christmas card, and as we gather for time together.

Do you feel the presence of the Lord in your advent preparations? Are you taken back to Christmas past? Are you remembering the joy of those Christmases, are you feeling the warmth of loved ones? Are you excited as you look towards the festivities of this Christmas, gathering with family and friends, sharing with those who are less fortunate, giving a piece of yourself to others? Are you thinking forward, living your life as an example, looking forward to the return of Christ and eternity with Him