

Among Us: God Made Visible in the Old Testament
Week 6: David - Rescue // Refuge

I. We're finishing up our series today called, Among Us, looking at appearances of the preincarnate Christ in the Old Testament. God the Son is co-eternal with God the Father and has been active at every step of our salvation. We see Christ throughout the Scriptures, including the Old Testament.

A. The Angel of the LORD is a distinct Being when we look at the context of the Old Testament texts. The commands that go forth and the response of humanity in the presence of the Angel of the LORD is different than a mere created angel.

Malak

1. is the Hebrew word that means messenger, sent one, or angel (office of or category of the created beings known as angels). The Trinity is beyond our comprehension but the Angel of the LORD helps us to better understand the distinction and oneness of God in three Persons in the Old Testament. These encounters are full of mystery and despite what we can't understand, what we must understand is that God's plan throughout eternity is to dwell among us and that sin would not have the power to permanently separate us from God.

2. The Old Testament saints, like David, looked ahead with faith in anticipation of what God would do. We look to God in faith based on what He has already done in Jesus Christ!

II. We'll be looking at Psalm 34 and its larger context of 1 Samuel 21:10-15. This is a story about King David before he became king. David speaks of the Angel of the LORD in a way that indicates David perceived Him to be someone distinct and other. He believed that the Angel of the LORD was to be:

Feared

A. David will claim that it is our fear of Him that will also lead to our rescue and refuge. How does fear of the LORD create a pathway to refuge? That's what we will aim to discover today. To better understand the context that evokes Psalm 34, let's begin by looking at 1 Samuel 21:10-15.

1 Samuel 21:10-15 - 10 David fled that day from Saul's presence and went to King Achish of Gath. 11 But Achish's servants said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Don't they sing about him during their dances: Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands?" 12 David took this to heart and became very afraid of King Achish of Gath, 13 so he pretended to be insane in their presence. He acted like a madman around them, scribbling on the doors of the city gate and letting saliva run down his beard. 14 "Look! You can see the man is crazy," Achish said to his servants. "Why did you bring him to me? 15 Do I have such a shortage of crazy people that you brought this one to act crazy around me? Is this one going to come into my house?"

1. David some years prior received the word of the LORD through Samuel that he was the anointed king of Israel and would replace King Saul. He's a young man full of faith, and his trust in God in the face of attack while guarding his sheep, leads him to boldly take on Goliath. He's a youth at this point while Goliath is a hardened warrior, but God favors David, and he kills Goliath.

2. Everything was great until it wasn't. Saul quickly grows resentful and makes it his goal to kill David. David is the anointed king. God has already given his word and confirmed that word in a miraculous way through the battle with Goliath. But, as is common to human nature, David begins to slowly fade into:

Compromise.

a. There is something potentially dangerous in our success and that is our propensity to cultivate pride. Pride makes us do some silly things and the silliest of all is to forgo our fear of the LORD. Just before 1 Samuel 21:10-15, we see a new side of David. He decides to outsmart Saul through the lie of a fake itinerary and earlier in 1 Samuel 21, David lies to the priest about being on a fake mission from Saul. David has become fearful of other things; namely what people might think or do to him. He compromises his trust in God and it's evident through a series of lies and deceitful actions.

b. This pattern only exacerbates the situation. Has anyone ever tried lies and deceit as a long-term plan? I have! But here is the problem with that plan. It's never a long-term plan. It's a short-term sin that might punt the consequences to a future date, but those consequences will come.

c. David decides to flee, rather than face Saul. He decides to substitute one problem for another and finds himself in the camp of a pagan king. Misplaced fear is never far removed from sin, and it manifests in

our choices to lie, leverage deceit, or compromise. We are afraid to come face to face with our decisions and trust in the goodness of God. David reaches a low point in his life when he as the anointed king leverages deceit amid pressure from a pagan king. He fakes insanity rather than trust in God. He's lost his perspective on what God has done to get him to this point.

3. David is on the run, but he can't outrun the presence of God. He flees to take refuge in the cave of Adullam. As he sits isolated in the physical refuge of the cave it is there that David writes Psalm 34. He will still have to face the consequences, but David is reminded that God is One who:
Rescues and gives refuge.

a. And God provides these in a specific way. David will let us know in Psalm 34.

Psalm 34:1-8 - 1 I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. 2 I will boast in the LORD; the humble will hear and be glad. 3 Proclaim the LORD's greatness with me; let us exalt his name together. 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me and rescued me from all my fears. 5 Those who look to him are radiant with joy; their faces will never be ashamed. 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him from all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them. 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!

b. David is isolated in a cave and it's a moment of solitude he needs to regain his perspective on the LORD. His fear had been misplaced. Life is full of battles and in the battle, it is easy to feel out of control. We don't know how someone is going to respond to a situation and that pulls our heart towards fear. Maybe we find ourselves in a crisis (health, family, career) and we have zero control over the outcome. Fear begins to grip our heart. I have a genuine fear that I must guard against when it comes to performance and meeting the expectations I perceive to be in the minds of others. Many Saturday nights I go into a funk as I read through the sermon. What appears to be a decent sermon on Monday starts to not look so good on Saturday night. Satan is powerful and he loves to manipulate our fear. We can find ourselves doing some crazy things in response to our fears.

B. How does David experience such a drastic perspective shift? David's praise leads him to proclaim the LORD's greatness and he invites others to exalt God's name together. Pessimism is contagious but so is praise. One of the blessings of the LORD in my life that occurs between the funk of Saturday night and preaching on Sunday is the Gathering Adult Bible Study. And the Gathering starts every week with a moment of:
WOW!

1. It's a time of proclamation of what God has done throughout the past week. It's a time that reminds me that God is still in the business of WOW! Praising God is contagious.
2. David is also reminded that God is the expert in search and rescue. There is nothing in Scripture that ever presents God as a passive Father. Do we realize that we have a God whose ear is bent toward His children? There was no cost too great to restore the relationship with sinful humanity. We trust in His goodness no matter the circumstance because He has proven Himself to be our Good Father.

C. We still have some work to do on these verses though, because we tend to have a predetermined outcome of what God's goodness will entail and when we don't receive the outcome we've determined, we grow frustrated with God's goodness. Sandwiched in these verses, David is reminding us that joy results from our focus being in the right place. We're not looking at our misplaced fears or at what we hope to occur. Our focus is on God and our relationship with Him. David seems to know that what we need most of all is:
The LORD's presence.

1. As David was declaring the LORD's faithfulness in a cave while on the run, he is declaring that the LORD's faithfulness is intricately connected to His presence. Listen again to this profound declaration:

Psalm 34:7 - 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them.

2. David knew a thing or two about the battles life inherently brings. Battles can take on many different forms. On one level we're always in a spiritual battle. Participating in God's kingdom agenda in a world that is fundamentally broken will always run the risk of opposition. Our battles can be so varied and unpredictable it's often more than we can withstand or bear on our own. The Angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him and rescues them!
3. Encampment is a military term that provides shelter and reprieve amid the battle. Here David refers to the Angel of the LORD in speaking of the presence of God that envelops him in the battle. The very presence of

God that is synonymous with rescue. We see the fullness of God's plan come to fruition in the incarnation of Jesus and yet here David knew that God was not distant in his troubles and His presence settles on those who fear Him. God rescues us in the battle and provides us with refuge. This is through His presence. He is all that we need.

D. We still haven't adequately explained how a healthy fear of God is a good thing that leads to refuge. The Angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. David says this in the next verse: Psalm 34:8 - 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!

1. David seems to believe that the fear of God can actually lead to our happiness. The New Testament doesn't alleviate this tension. Listen to these startling words from Jesus:

Luke 12:4-5 - "I say to you, my friends, don't fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. 5 But I will show you the one to fear: Fear him who has authority to throw people into hell after death. Yes, I say to you, this is the one to fear!"

2. Doesn't everyone feel happy right now? How do fear and love work together?

a. Jonathan Edwards, an 18th century theologian, has helped me in this area:

There are no other principles which human nature is under the influence of that will ever make men conscientious but one of these two, fear or love: and therefore if one of these should not prevail as the other decayed, God's people when fallen into dead and carnal frames, when love is asleep would be lamentably exposed indeed. And therefore God has wisely ordained, that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall like the two opposite scales of a balance; when one rises the other sinks.... Fear is cast out by the Spirit of God, no other way than by the prevailing of love: nor is it ever maintained by his Spirit but when love is asleep....

b. It's why John Newton wrote these lines in Amazing Grace: 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved.

3. There is something about the presence of God that brings about fear and love. Fear that God is mighty and has all authority. There should be a time in our lives when we've gotten low and recognized the awesomeness of God. The ability to humble pride-filled human beings is one of the most mighty acts of God. Without fear we don't naturally get to that point. But what we discover when we cast ourselves into the hands of an awesome God is the purest love we've ever experienced or ever will. It is the perfect love of God that drives out fear (1 John 4:18).

E. David was on to something. His fear of the LORD was the pathway for his rescue and refuge! As David penned these verses on the run in a cave, he recognized the Angel of the LORD's presence as a source of fear. David became aware of the awesomeness of God and God humbled him.

1. Some of us have never calibrated our lives around the fear of the LORD. That God is in charge, and we aren't. When we submit to the awesomeness of God, we simultaneously discover that His intentions all along have been to Dwell Among Us. That as we discover the depths of His love, which have no bounds, fear melts away by that perfect love. Jesus has demonstrated for us the perfect love of God. God is love. It isn't a characteristic; it's His essence.

2. Jesus doesn't diminish the awesomeness of God in any way. Jesus has demonstrated the love of God by maintaining God's holy standard and doing everything necessary to reconcile sinners. He has rescued us and given us refuge from that which we needed most. People are afraid of all these "things" except for that which really matters: the wrath of God! And yet the love of God that He would satisfy His wrath through the payment of the Son so we might be permanently rescued and placed in refuge.

3. David anticipated the promises of God and came to this conclusion:

Psalm 34:7-8 - 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them. 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!

4. We, like the Apostle John, look back on what Christ has done and proclaim:

1 John 4:9 - 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him.

F. We have much to be thankful for as we reflect this morning on our awesome God. An awesomeness that apart from Jesus Christ should lead us to fear. And yet, the love of God that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6).