

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 6.30.2024

PSALM 39 - THE BREVITY OF LIFE

I. INTRODUCTION

Psalm 39:1-13

1 I said, "I will guard my ways,

that I may not sin with my tongue;

I will guard my mouth with a muzzle,

so long as the wicked are in my presence."

2 I was mute and silent;

I held my peace to no avail,

and my distress grew worse.

3 My heart became hot within me.

As I mused, the fire burned;

then I spoke with my tongue:

4 "O Lord, make me know my end

and what is the measure of my days;

let me know how fleeting I am!

5 Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths,

and my lifetime is as nothing before you.

Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! *Selah*

6 Surely a man goes about as a shadow!

Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;

man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!

7 "And now, O Lord, for what do I wait?

My hope is in you.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions.

Do not make me the scorn of the fool!

9 I am mute; I do not open my mouth,

for it is you who have done it.

10 Remove your stroke from me;

I am spent by the hostility of your hand.

11 When you discipline a man

with rebukes for sin,

you consume like a moth what is dear to him;

surely all mankind is a mere breath! *Selah*

12 "Hear my prayer, O Lord,

and give ear to my cry;

hold not your peace at my tears!

For I am a sojourner with you,

a guest, like all my fathers.

13 Look away from me, that I may smile again,

before I depart and am no more!"

II. DAVID'S RETICENCE

- The title of the psalm is "To the choirmaster: to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.
- Jeduthun was one of the men David appointed to lead worship. (1 Chron 16 and 25)
- It seems that this composition was placed in Jeduthun's capable hands to set David's words to music.
- This tells us that this psalm, though an individual lament, was to be instructive for the people of God.

- Now, what's striking is that David determined to keep his mouth shut. He is reticent to voice his complaint, to vent his frustration and anguish in public.
- v1 I said, "I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue..."
- David knew that if he voiced publicly what he was really feeling, the questions he had, the anger and anguish he felt, that he would inevitably sin with his mouth.
- Like a muzzle placed on an animal, David muzzled himself and kept himself silent in his suffering, so long as the wicked were in his presence.
- We don't know exactly what David's trouble or affliction was. But it's obvious he is in distress of some kind.
- And it's obvious to those around him, especially to wicked people who maybe were bringing false charges against him or who were gloating

about the misery David was in.

- Psalm 22:7-8 All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 8 “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”
- David knew that his enemies would love nothing more than to exploit his vulnerability and mock his trust in God.

- It’s interesting that David felt that the easiest way to avoid further sin was to remain speechless about his trouble.
- The problem is that he owed it to God to speak well of his name, but in whatever he was going through, he couldn’t even do that.
- Maybe his questions and condition would cause him to speak harshly about God, so he doesn’t say anything at all.
- And if he said something before the wicked, that would give them further cause in their opposition to God and to persist in their sinfulness.
- David commits to not work out his frustration with God’s dealings, his struggles with the way God is disciplining him, in public.
- He doesn’t want to tarnish the name of God. He doesn’t want unbelievers to have cause to revile the name of God.

- Struggling with your faith in times of trouble, and having questions is not the issue. We will all have those moments.
- It’s how you conduct yourself when you do. It’s how you handle them and how you address them.
- We will have those times in our walk of faith, but there is a fundamental difference in working through those issues with God and his people, and working them out in a way that is public before an unbelieving world that brings disgrace to the name of God.

- David is privately wrestling and struggling with God.
- You will have those times. You may be in that time right now.
- You may have lots of questions and very few answers.
- You may even be angry with God at the moment over something you are going through.
- But you must be on guard against the sins that can creep up in these times.
- Murmuring, complaining, venting your discontent before people who will take what you say to further rebel against God and revile God, would be sinful.

- David’s silence over time only heightens his anxiety.
- V2 I was mute and silent; I held my peace to no avail, and my distress grew worse.
- “My heart becomes hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned.:
- His inward thoughts were stewing and fermenting and the fire was burning hot within so that he could contain it no longer.

- David was prudent in restraining his tongue before unbelievers, and being careful not to sin with his mouth by keeping silent, that is wisdom.
- But the way he was handling his grief was intensifying his inner anguish of soul.
- Being silent and not even saying positive things and directing his grief to God was eating him up.
- We should pour ourselves out must fully to God and also to a wise, mature and godly friend who can listen, pray for us, and counsel us.

III. DAVID'S REFLECTION

- He asks the Lord a question because he is reflecting on his life.

- He is meditating upon the purpose of the suffering and sorrow and darkness that he is walking through.
 - *V4 O Lord, make me to know my end and what is the measure of my days.*
 - Why is he asking this?
 - On the one hand, David wants to know if there is an end to his sorrows.
- But also, because David is a man of faith, he wants to be able to contemplate the brevity of life so that he can better bear up under the momentary pains one experiences in life.
 - There is a wisdom element in this psalm because it addresses the question of the meaning and purpose of life.
 - It causes one to reflect on the brevity of life, how fleeting it is, when considered against the span of human history and measured against eternity.
 - “You have made my days a few handbreadths...” A handbreadth was the shortest of measurements in ancient times.
 - God has fixed the period of the length of our days in wisdom.
- Psalm 90:10-11, 12 For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. 10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.
 - David and Moses are reflecting on life’s brevity and the trouble and pain that marks our brief life.
 - Especially when one considers the eternal. “My lifetime is nothing before you.”
- Wisdom dictates that because God has fixed the span of our life in such a way, that we should reflect on the brevity of life to be careful to attend to it with much grace even as we can expect it to be filled with toil and trouble.
- David wrote, “Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!” A phrase repeated in v11.
 - V4-6 remind us of what the preacher of Ecclesiastes said about human life.
 - Ecc 1:2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.
 - The word breath is the same Hebrew word found in Ecclesiastes for “vanity.”
 - Life is transitory, it’s like smoke, like a mere breath.
 - James 4:14b What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.
- Like what is expressed in Ecclesiastes, David shares about the vain and empty pursuits of life which are but a shadow.
 - People fret and worry over things that are really nothing.
 - Men pursue wealth and riches, toiling in their life to acquire possessions and treasures, only to be pursued by death.
 - And when they die, the treasure they worked so hard to amass ends up with strangers.
- David’s reflection in the face of suffering and trials is insightful.
 - He asked the same questions all of us ask in these times.
 - Even righteous Job, when afflicted by trouble, was at a deep place of questioning, and seeming hopelessness. He struggled to find purpose in his pain.

- He vented and complained. He was bitter in soul. He expressed how fleeting his life was, and how painful the arrows of the Lord were
- He says several times, "I loathe my life..." (Job 7:16)
- David, like Job, all expressed the same thing many of us do in painful and dark times, when there are more questions than answers, when we are angry and confused, "*When will we get some relief?*"
- Maybe you find yourself in good company today with David and Job and every saint of God that has experienced this and it is refreshing to hear that you're not alone.
- I believe David's reflection and contemplation on the brevity of life brought him comfort knowing that the sorrow and pain and trouble, even all the vain things of life, will soon pass away.

IV. DAVID'S REPENTANCE

- V7-11 we finally learn why the psalmist kept silent and didn't want to share his questions and struggles in the presence of the wicked.
- His reflection on the brevity of life is motivated by the reality that he is dealing with sorrow and pain because of God's discipline in response to his sin.
- Many times the pain, trouble, sorrow, and darkness we experience in life is caused at the hands of others, people who sin against us.
- Sometimes our own foolishness can bring pain to our life.
- Sometimes it's because the world is broken, our bodies are broken and we experience the pangs of affliction.
- And sometimes, the sorrow and pain is part of God's discipline in our life.
- It is coming from the hand of the Lord.
- V7-8 David turns to God as the only possible source of hope and he asks for God to lift his hand and give him relief from the painful discipline he was enduring.
- "*And now, O Lord, for what do I wait My hope is in you.*" "*You are my only hope to be delivered from my transgressions.*"
- David repents as he is requesting for God to deliver him, acknowledging that his pain and suffering must be the correcting discipline from the Lord for his sin.
- And since the painful dealings he was going through were God's doing, David realized he must remain silent.
- V8b "Do not make me the scorn of the fool! I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it."
- C.H. Spurgeon wrote in *The Treasury of David*, "*Here we have a nobler silence, sweetened by submission. Nature failed to muzzle the mouth but grace achieved the work in the worthiest manner.*"
- I find in David's expression a submission to the divine will. He knows it's coming from God. He knows God has a purpose in it. He knows God is disciplining him.
- It is the same thing that Job discovered, that what had come upon him was from the hand of the Lord for a divine purpose, and he repented (Job 42).
- V10 David pleads, "Remove your stroke from me..." God's discipline is meant to be felt, and it is.
- While we don't readily understand the purpose of trials, tears, turmoil, trouble, and every other suffering under the sun, we can be assured that if those things are coming to us as God's discipline, there is a glorious divine purpose behind it.

- God's discipline, the writer of Hebrews reminds us, is coming from the hand of a loving Father.
- Hebrews 12:4-11 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
- What is God doing in his loving discipline?
- Disciplining us for our good.
- Disciplining us so that we may share his holiness.
- And even if it is painful in the moment and unpleasant, know that God's discipline is not meant to punish you but to produce in you the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

V. DAVID'S REQUEST

- David makes a final request of the Lord in v12-13
- He is crying out for mercy and to bring this season of discipline and correction and tears to a speedy end so that he can rejoice again.
- If God doesn't withdraw his discipline he fears he will not last long.
- He appeals to God on the basis of the hope he has in him.
- V12b For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.
- He recognized that he lived before God as an alien and a stranger in this world. Like the people of God and his fathers before him.
- David knew who he was and where he was going.
- David's hope was in the promise of what is to come for those whose hope is in God.
- Hebrews 11:10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.
- Hebrews 11:13-16 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.
- Here is the hope of everyone who has placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and the promises of God.
- We understand that in this life we will have trouble. We will at times be disciplined by our loving heavenly Father because he is preparing us for glory, he is preparing us for the better country, the city whose maker and builder is God.
- If you are in Christ, that's where you are headed.
- And the reason we can have that hope is because even when we walk through dark seasons, painful trials, and endure painful discipline at the

hand of God, we know he is not punishing us because Christ was punished for us, for our sins.

- And God's discipline doesn't mean he doesn't love us and delights in seeing us suffer because we know that "in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:4-5).
 - We know that he is a God rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ, by grace we have been saved...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:4-7).
 - Everything that you are walking through in this brief life, God has purposed to prepare you for what he has promised.
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- When we are face to face with the One who loved us and gave himself for us, all that we will have experienced, every sorrow, every tear, every heartache, will make perfect sense.
 - Death will be swallowed up in victory and we will experience everlasting, unspeakable joy.
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- Here's what that means for you and me.
 - We can come to God with every question, every complaint, every fear we have, even voicing to him our frustration and anger, because we know who we are, we are reconciled to God in Christ; we are loved children of God.
 - And we know where we are going, to the heavenly city, passing through this brief life and looking forward to the day when Christ will make all things new.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?