

How are you doing? How are you holding up these past two months? If you had to describe your life in a word, how would you do it? Is it fine? Okay? Manageable? Peaceful? Strained? Blessed? Is the life you live today a blessed life? A happy life? Everyone desires to be happy, to be fulfilled, to be blessed. Everyone wants to be described as a tree and not as chaff. But that doesn't always seem to be what happens. For every moment of happiness, it seems as though there is another moment of grief or pain.

Here at the very start of the book of psalms, we find a contrast between two different ways: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. The psalm describes the righteous man as blessed, like a well-watered tree, and the wicked as those who will perish, will blow away like chaff. Two ways. Is the life you live an abundant life in the way of the righteous? Is that what life in social isolation is? Or does it feel as though it is here today and gone tomorrow?

This psalm can almost seem naïve and immature in how sharply it paints the contrast. After all, which Christian can say that when they live righteously, they're prospering in comparison with the people all around them living in sin? Yet the claim is made: Blessed is the man. And a contrast is described: he is like a tree, but the wicked are like chaff blown away. The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, inspired this psalm to be written to paint a picture of a way of life in God and life apart from him. Two ways.

The first word in the book of Psalms is "Blessed." This is a key word found throughout the psalms. Here in the first psalm, it is placed at the very beginning, in opposition to the last word of the psalm, "to perish." To be blessed is to be happy. To be filled with joy. Who does not want to be happy? Who does not want to be filled with delight? What does this psalm have to say about being blessed, being happy? It is in opposition to the way that perishes, that comes to nothing. The opposite of that is to amount to something, to gain, to be fulfilled. We can be reminded of the book of Ecclesiastes, how the author pursues multiple avenues of fulfillment, but laments again and again how empty and meaningless everything is, how void everything apart from God points to. But it's conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12? "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

This is also the perspective we find in the first Psalm: blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. The psalm also concludes its remarks in the contrast of our text: the Lord knows the way of the righteous. The man who delights in God's law, who loves it and meditates on it and follows it is one who fulfills his duty and has his accomplishment. He is carrying out the abundant life that God had created him to do.

But then the psalmist describes the wicked in stark contrast to the blessed man who delights in the law of God. While the righteous man is like a living tree standing firm, the wicked are like chaff blown away. Chaff is good for nothing. Chaff is the waste product from the harvest of grain. When the grain was harvested, it would be brought to the threshing floor. There the grain would be tossed into the air, and while the crop would fall back to the ground, the chaff would be blown away by the wind.

Chaff is light and useless, to be disposed of. The wicked are described in this psalm as those without substance, as those who don't have any weight. By describing the wicked as chaff, the psalm is saying that the wicked will not amount to anything at all. In fact, they'll be blown away and forgotten. Their way will perish. With this brief comparison, beloved, we are painted a vivid picture of the wicked, a picture of nothingness.

Blessed. Is that your life today? Or do you feel more in line with the last word of the psalm? We've been through more than a year of social isolation now. How are your relationships with those you can't see and interact with? How about your relationships with those you are perhaps now seeing and interacting with too much? College and university students, how does it feel to have 'completed' another term, does it feel like a proper accomplishment?

How about work? For some, there is no longer work to be done. For others, work is done in a diminished way. For still others, demand for work has gone up, along with increased risk. Do any of those positions feel blessed? Fulfilled? Or is there a feeling of being stretched thin.

This psalm has presented to us two ways to live. One way is the blessed way, and the other way is a way that will end, that will perish, that will lead to nothing. Is this now a choice for us? Did you tune in to today's meditation for a how-to guide for your life? Don't walk in wicked ways, but instead follow God's law and all of your problems will go away...

But that is not the message of God's Word, and it is not the message of Psalm 1. A blessed life is one in the way that God had created it, how man is to know God and to love him and to live with him in blessedness. A life from before the fall, a life that is impossible for us to attain. A life that can only be restored by the Son of God, in whom life was created.

Psalm 1 does not bring a message of what you must do in order to get yourself a fulfilling life. It is a psalm that speaks of the reality of fulfilled life in God and perished death away from him. It's a psalm that reminds us of the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. It's one that points to the fulfillment of the law. A psalm that testifies to the grace we have in our Saviour Christ Jesus.

Jesus contrasted himself with the one who brings nothing in John 10. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." The way of the wicked brings nothing, but Christ came to bring abundant and blessed life for his people, people like you and me.

What is more, he was willing and able to give up everything in his life so that we can have life. He was willing to perish so that we can be blessed. His sacrifice on the cross has brought fulfillment and meaning to our lives that nothing else can ever do. The law of the Lord points to this blessed reality, and in Christ it becomes a love and delight for us. In our Saviour we have purpose restored.

When your eyes are set on the here and now, and you look through the same lens as your neighbour, when life today becomes the only important element, it is easy to struggle. To worry. To lose sight of being blessed. But when your heart and mind turns to the life-giving word, and delights in the beauty of God's law, and sees the righteousness that is yours in Christ, there is a view to blessing! There is a perspective that can find rest and comfort. There is hope and confidence that a moment of weariness today pales in comparison with an eternity of blessed communion with your Lord and Savior.

The opening words of this psalm are filled with power and fury. You get a sense of the tension and opposition and conflict from these words. It's a sharp departure from the words of trees being watered found in the first psalm. You may recall from last week how we noticed the contrast between blessing and perishing in Psalm 1. Psalm 1 has shown us the rich blessing one has in following the way of the Lord, and now in Psalm 2 we find the folly of a world that has turned on its Creator.

We may think of the blessing and riches and life that man can have with the Lord God, the one who created all things and upholds all things, and then look around and see how man is acting. We see restlessness. We see turmoil. We see rage and anger and frustration. So as we look about in this world filled with turmoil: heightened tensions in the WHO, in international relations with China and the Middle East, the coronavirus pandemic, the financial crisis its response has brought, protests, injustices, and the question immediately rises to our tongues, "Why?" Some may ask, "Why do people act so cruelly?" Still others, "Why is society so systematically corrupt?" Some Christians may ask, "Why, oh LORD, do you allow these things to happen?"

This is also how the psalm begins, "Why?" But it does not ask the why most might ask. No, it goes deeper. Built upon the foundation that the man who follows the LORD is blessed, and the wicked will come to nothing, the question is asked, "Why do they rage?" "Why do they plot?" "Why do they set themselves against the LORD?" What does it profit the nations, the people, the sons of Adam, to turn against the LORD, to conspire against him? Do they not know who he is?

But that makes no difference to the world. They still take their stand, and refuse to acknowledge the LORD. It explains the chaos of the world. It highlights for us how these things have come about. The world froths and heaves and rages because it has rejected the Creator, the God of life and peace. Brothers and sisters, when you look at the world around you, do not ask God why he allows such things. Wonder instead at the brokenness and depravity of the heart of man! Why do they rage in vain? Do they not know who is truly in control? Do they not know the power of he who sits in the heavens? They do not.

The world is in rebellion against the LORD. It considers the authority of the divine as bondage. The burden of serving God is considered a heavy yoke, something that ties them down. And this should not come as a surprise to us. This is a story as old as the fall. This is the state of a world that has turned its back on the LORD, and does not recognize his authority. Everything the world does is through that lens: a world at war with its Creator.

And there's a certain solace for us in that. We do not have to worry like our neighbours do about what tomorrow brings. We do not need to fret about what disaster could come next. We do not wonder at whether life will be better or worse for the next generation. We may know that the world will continue to rage and plot in vain against the LORD. Satan will continue his attacks upon the church. Other calamities will beset this earth in the months and years to come. But for all the plans and methods of the governments of the world, we know with certainty what the result is: God has set his King on his holy hill.

Now such an outlook may seem a little too dismissive of the world. After all, the kings and rulers and presidents and generals and prime ministers and chancellors of the world are powerful people. The calamities and disasters that face the civilizations across the globe are not small matters. Can they be so easily dismissed? Surely we must contend with such weighty matters?

The psalm we sing has a far wider and higher perspective than we do. After considering the powers that be here below, we are lifted up to consider the one above. He who sits in the heavens is also active, and what is his reaction to the frenzied opposition below? The enthroned one looks from his position of authority and power, and he is amused. He laughs. Even mocks. For as powerful as the rulers of the world seem to us, they are less than nothing compared to the LORD Almighty, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And it's that perspective that we ourselves need to have when we feel overwhelmed. Our concerns and anxieties about the future can rest in knowing that the opposition our faith will face is less than nothing compared to our Lord. For he is strong and mighty. He will have the last say. He has already guaranteed the victory!

We began by reflecting upon everything going on in the world around us. A world that does not

recognize the power and authority of God. Many do not even acknowledge the existence of the divine anymore, refusing to even recognize a spiritual element to reality. If God is not acknowledged, and nothing seems to come of it, is our Lord making good on his word of verses 8 and 9?

Regardless of the perspective of the rulers of the world, the warning still goes out. All Creation testifies to the glory and power of the Creator, the conscience of man accuses him of wrongdoing. Everyone knows there is injustice and needless suffering in this life, and that life on this earth could be better, blessed even. There is no excuse for denying God.

But the warning still goes out. Be wise, be warned, be aware. And there's a lot of comfort in these words. That the God of the universe, who created all life and upholds this earth and is the rightful ruler of all things who deserves all honour and glory, is willing to warn the rulers of rebellion, is a gracious thing. Think again of how the psalm began! Nations rage, people plot, rulers taking counsel and setting themselves against the LORD. They compare his authority to bondage, his governance to chains. Wanting nothing to do with the King of Kings, they seek rebellion.

What sort of ruler is so gracious and compassionate and slow to anger that he would grant forgiveness for such blatant acts of rebellion? What sort of God do we have that is able to restore those who abuse the authority derived from his authority? Our God is good and gracious and is willing to be reconciled even to such an affront to his holy name. This is especially comforting for us when we reflect upon our own state. After all, when looking at the sinful rebellion of the world around us, we cannot forget our own rebellious nature. That we too, apart from Christ, are children of wrath, conceived and born in sin, and would eagerly go astray and refuse to serve God Almighty. Yet the warning against sin has come. The call to repent and to cling to the Son and to live a new life for him has earnestly gone out. Look at how David concludes the psalm, "Blessed are all who take refuge in him." A psalm that highlights that despite the tumult of the nations, the Lord has set his King with power and authority. And because of that? When we take refuge in him, rather than worrying about the authorities of the land, we find rest and peace. We may be blessed. We may know that he uses his power and authority to govern us properly for our well-being. May we live in the gospel of our Saviour Christ Jesus the King, "Repent and believe, for the kingdom of God is at hand."

The past two weeks we've looked at the first two Psalms, first a psalm about blessing in Christ and perishing outside of him, and then a psalm about God's power and authority over every other authority on earth, but for today? Today we have the first psalm of lament. A psalm that David was inspired by the Spirit to write when he was on the run, cast out from the city by a rebellious son leading a coup on his throne.

But this is the Word of God, and it is given for our benefit. It is a word that is timeless and relates to us in our own struggles and sorrows. For all the joy that can be found in simple moments of our lives, we could easily lose them in the sea of suffering that is human life.

So in our moments of joy, we remain grounded in why we have a lasting joy. Whenever we face confrontation or feel overwhelmed by opposition, we may turn to God's Word and know of what we have in God, the peace and rest we can enjoy as his children, and the good news of salvation that we can bring to sinners from every background!

The opening words of this psalm highlight the dire situation David was in. He is surrounded by enemies. They are a great horde of people that have risen to oppress him. He's not just describing an enemy that he might face on the field of battle, but more specifically those that would oppress him. They would press in on him. The impression is that he is being crushed, pressed in on every side, worried about being overwhelmed by it all.

There are times where we feel like we can't catch a break. And we might ask where is the God of Psalm 1 and 2? Where is the Lord who has set his king on Zion? Where is the Lord God who laughs at the enemy? Now many are even willing to blaspheme and say that God won't provide salvation! An open taunt of no salvation in God for the soul. It can seem as though the world around us is changing, is transforming into an unfamiliar place, giving rights and freedoms that ought not to be, while withholding rights from others, like the preborn. It seems as though there is intense opposition to the Word. But for all the sense of crushing, for the opposition that can be experienced, how things appear, how things seem, does not line up with reality. With how things are.

Notice how the oppressor talks, how he does not say the name of God. “There is no salvation for him in God.” They cannot say the covenant name of the Lord. They do not fully understand what they are talking about. If his enemies did know the name of the Lord, if they did know the power and authority of the living and eternal LORD God, they would not rise up.

The reality that David was portraying in his sense of despair was not a true reality, but one that his enemies were pushing. They had an agenda, they wanted him to feel overwhelmed, and to not acknowledge his God and his power. And this covenant child, despite the overwhelming situation he was in, did not give in to despair. For however dire his situation appeared, he knew he could call upon the Lord. Right from the start of the psalm, he names the one his enemies would not. He calls out, “Oh Lord.” For how things appear is not how things are! This psalm does not end with David being overwhelmed by his enemies, but it carries on into the reality of the LORD.

He confesses that the LORD is his shield, his glory, the one who lifts up his head. He counters the false assumption of the unbeliever with the truth. David knows the reality of his enemies pressing in on every side, and he does not succumb to a fear of the enemy because he knows that God is sovereign. He knows that God is in control. He knows that the LORD is in control, and that he is the one who is acting in this world. Therefore he does not set himself against the foe, but calls upon the LORD to act.

He appeals to God to arise and save him. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! This is the plea for deliverance we could expect after the first two verses. This is what we expect from the man who needs help from the Almighty One, the God who is able to save, the one who is his shield.

It’s important for us to recognize that the great insults of verse 1 and 2 are primarily against the LORD God. When they taunt and say there is no salvation for him in God, they are insulting the Lord himself. So the wrath to be incurred is not David’s wrath, but the Lord’s wrath. He himself left the city of Jerusalem, fleeing for his life from his son. Part of the reason David fled the city was because the city would be put to the sword. He himself left with his officials, and Absalom spared the city. He waited on the LORD before battle would take place.



We know, brothers and sisters, that when Christ Jesus returns, he will put to shame all of his enemies. We know that in the last judgment those that do not believe in him will perish, and that his people will receive a crown of glory. We know that his victory is guaranteed, and that he waits that day so that he can call his people out of darkness and into his light. Both in the Old and the New Testament, God reminds his people that Vengeance is his. Both in his law in Deuteronomy and in Paul's letter to the Romans, the LORD reminds us that he will have vengeance for injustice against his name. We may call on him to act in justice, but what about ourselves? How do we act?

In our knowledge of how God will bring judgment to those who reject him, we need to come with grace and care for our neighbours. We cannot know who God has called to follow him, and who he leaves in darkness. We can only know that we ourselves are recipients of undeserved grace, and are called to bring the message of a LORD God who is a shield, and who does give glory and dignity to his people.

Our desire for the justice of God and for his vengeance is from that perspective. Oh Lord, may you be a shield to me, to your people, to those you call your children. And also Lord, may you show your power and glory in how you will respond to this world's affront to your holy name. But may that vengeance be the Lord's, and not our own. May we not stand in the way of the gospel. Let us stand as a witness to the world of the beautiful reality we live in: one that is grounded in Christ. One that knows we are protected for eternity. One that knows glory and honour await when the earth is made new. For Salvation belongs to the LORD; his blessing is on his people!

How often do you lie awake at night and wonder about tomorrow? How often do you stir with restlessness as the problems of the day are turned over and over in your mind? Sometimes you toss and turn and look over at the clock and realize you haven't been sleeping for hours. There's just too much going on. There's problems to solve, situations to address, issues to go over.

This morning we've turned to Psalm 4, a psalm that David sings as he calls out to his Lord for answers. He has serious issues to contend with, with real opponents that are making his life very difficult. He's concerned about the impact this will have on his life. What does he do about it? He turns to the Lord in prayer. He calls upon his God for help. And in doing so, he recognizes his true status: one of blessing.

The psalm opens with a powerful appeal to his God. "Answer me, when I call!" It's an opening word that calls upon his Lord and God, because he does not know where else to turn. As we'll see in a moment, he's surrounded by opponents, people who would have him shamed and defeated and humiliated. He's in distress, and where's the one place he turns to for his blessing? For his help? The Lord God!

He invokes God with a particular title: God of my righteousness. My righteousness. The one who helps is the judge of the living and the dead, the one he calls upon is just and perfect in his law. At first glance, we may think that David is being a bit presumptuous here, and is calling on God in pride and arrogance. But this is his righteousness because of the verdict of the perfect Judge. He's received the declaration of righteousness and can rightly call upon his Lord and God as the one who knows his covenant child and his status before him. His next appeal, asking for graciousness, we know that David does not call on God on his own merits, on his righteousness, but is seeking the Lord's aid.

And what is David seeking help from? We learn a lot in verse 2 about his position, as he addresses his adversaries. He addresses them as the sons of men, and not the humble son of man like how Jesus referred to himself.

No, the Hebrew word used here to describe his opponents is more about noteworthy people. These are people whose words had clout. When they spoke, things happened. People listened. Give a good word, and doors opened. Speak otherwise, and your target suffered.

And these people were using their influence to target David. They were mocking him and spreading rumours about him. They were tarnishing his reputation. They were taking his glory, his honour, and turning it to shame. His reputation was being torn to shreds by their false testimony, their lies, their slander. There was no blessing for him in their word, they were giving him a curse by their word.

But their words were empty. They're delusional, empty, vain. Like the mist that disappears with the morning sun, their words were like vapour: empty and profitless. We may immediately be reminded of the state of our Lord and Saviour when he stood accused by liars and slanderers. They gathered around him in the dark night and cast lies and false testimony upon him. They wanted his reputation dragged through the mud, they wanted the teachings of Jesus dismissed and forgotten. The scribes and the Pharisees used their considerable clout to attempt to shame our Saviour.

Our faithful Lord and Saviour is also David's Saviour, and he had let his servant know by faith his status. David could call on God in his distress and know that the Lord had set the godly for himself, that he would therefore hear him when he called. He knew that the words of his opponents were empty and vain, and would not stick for long, since his righteousness was declared by God.

It's in that righteousness, that's his because of the descendant who bore a far greater insult to his honour than David ever would. The one who would be slandered and made light of to a far greater extent than David came so that no word of man could have a lasting impact, but the blessing by the word of God would carry him forward.

David had opportunity even as his foes were slandering him and putting him down to rest easy in knowing that the Lord hears him when he calls. It's almost as if David is beginning to answer his own prayer by remembering who he's praying to! He could call upon his God in distress, frustrated with all of his opposition, how many of high reputation were ruining his own, and in that call of distress speak about how the Lord hears!

This is the assurance that we have when we call upon God. This is why prayer is so important for us! God knows our estate, he knows our condition, he knows what we struggle with. He searches our hearts and knows us more truly than we know ourselves. Yet we still pray to him because we depend upon him, and so desperately need his help and support. And the beautiful thing about prayer is that even as we pray, his Spirit gently reminds us and assures us of his presence, of his help, of his support, of his blessing. In stark contrast with the vain words and lies of the opponent, the words of prayer directed at our loving God are filled with depth and truth.

Even in the face of distress, David can experience peace because of his God. What of the taunting of his foe? He has God's blessing and communion. What of his reputation in tatters? He has the favour of the eternal Lord. What is the material wealth of his foes while he suffers? He has joy in his faithful Lord God. He is experiencing firsthand the effects of God's grace and favour to him. His opponents were equating their wealth and influence with the blessing of the gods, but David knew that it was only knowing God's presence that would properly let him lie down and sleep in safety.

We see in this psalm a complete overview of a difficult situation. Contrast the start of the psalm with the end of the psalm! Earnest words at the beginning that call upon God to answer with grace and mercy in the midst of distress. Words about the terrible things others are doing. And slowly, as the picture unfolds, as we move through this reflection, the picture is transformed from unpleasant struggle to quiet joy and peace.

That is the blessing our God provides for his people! It's a blessing to know the word of prayer is heard by a God who listens, who does more than simply receive words, but also calms our hearts and reminds us that he has set us apart for himself. It's a blessing to know that we are counted as righteous for the sake of Christ, and that our actions, our walk in accordance with his law, our living sacrifice of thanksgiving is done in the light of his face shining upon us.

How do you respond to opposition? How do you react to stressful situations? To attacks on your reputation? To the prosperity of others? Turn to the Lord in prayer. Take your needs and issues to him, cast your anxieties upon him as your faithful and loving God. Recognize the comfort that is yours as his Spirit quiets you and the strength he provides to face each new challenge.

Psalm 5 moves back and forth between two narratives, and shows the polarity that so often characterizes our prayers, our petitions to our Lord God. On the one hand, we have the Lord God in his majesty and holiness and glory. He is in his holy temple and his righteousness is undisputed. On the other hand, you have humans below. So many who walk in wickedness, boast in themselves, speak lies and act with bloodthirsty vengeance.

So we find in this psalm a walking back and forth. First, a petition to the Lord to hear and pay attention to him. Then he thinks about those who cannot come before him in their wickedness. Then he contrasts that with himself and how he comes to the Lord in his steadfast love and righteousness. He looks again at the wicked with their lies, destruction, death, and transgressions. Finally, closing with thoughts of the refuge and protection the LORD provides, he prays for that protection.

We have a psalm that comes before the LORD God with that request. There is the opening appeal to the Lord to give ear, consider his plight, to pay attention to his cry. The impression we may receive is that sometimes even words do not come forth in the request. We may think of what Paul wrote to the Romans, that we do not always know what to pray for as we ought, yet the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. This psalm is again asking God to hear both his spoken words, and the words left unspoken. Sometimes we're able to articulate what is pressing upon our hearts, but sometimes we don't quite know how to put to words our struggles. This psalm calls upon God to consider both, for he knows us more than we know ourselves.

This psalm highlights for us a good amount about the nature of man. Since our hearts can be so deceptive, and we ourselves are so prone to sin, it is good for us to be reminded again in this psalm about the extent of man and our need for protection. It's when we read of what righteousness and holiness is, and learn more about who God is and what may be in his presence, that we learn to recognize evil. We begin to see what is wicked, what boasting is, how bloodthirsty the hearts of man can be. Through the lens of Scripture, we gain a clearer understanding of the depth of the depravity of the world and its desperate need for salvation. And for those who refuse to come before the Lord, our own need for protection.

The contrast this psalm highlights for us shows to us that there is only one truth. There is only truth to be found with the Lord, and that everyone outside of that truth can be described as boastful, bloodthirsty, deceitful, destructive. If we do not find ourselves in the way of the Lord, if we do not come in his steadfast love, if we do not bow down in the fear of his Name, we too fall by our own counsel, bear our own guilt, and will be cast out. We confess that truly there is no one righteous before God. We need to recognize our sins and misery, and therefore our need for deliverance, our need for redemption from ourselves. Indeed, one of the enemies we ask God for deliverance from in the sixth petition is our own sinful nature!

Jesus Christ knows better than we do our need for protection. He knows that we need to be kept in his Father's name. That only being guarded by God Almighty would keep us safe. We need to be kept as his people given to Christ from out of the world. Our Saviour's petition echoes the petition of this psalm, a psalm that acknowledged coming before God in divine righteousness.

Our great high priest in his devotion for us knew how much we need God's protection, for he bore the impact of who we'd be outside of his protection. The pronouncement of judgment in verse 10 fell upon him: we do not bear our guilt, he did; we do not fall by the counsel of man, he did; we are not cast out from his presence because of abundance of transgression, he was. That's the contrast he affords us who can now take refuge in God and sing forever in joy.

Even as he was making preparations to go to the cross, our King brought our needs before God seeking our protection, our shield. He does not ask for complete removal from the world, but asks that his people be kept from the evil one. We remain in the world, sent into the world by the one who was sent by the Father for our deliverance. And in the protection he asks for us, he asks for sanctity in truth, truth found in the Word of life. The words of truth and life that come from God, over against the death and decay of the open grave of the unrighteous.

Brothers and sisters, with that prayer, that petition for our benefit, our Saviour went to his betrayal and arrest. He went to the cross to suffer and be cast out. His sacrifice was given to deliver us from evil, to protect us from our own sin. That enables the LORD to bless us as righteous, to consider us in his righteousness, to cover us with favour won with his blood.

We see the urgency for praying for protection. We recognize our need to pray for protection. In our Saviour's prayer and in his action, we see the assurance in seeking protection. We have confidence that as surely as the Father heard the prayer of the Son, so he surely hears our daily prayer for protection. We may know that each morning's prayer that calls upon God to spread his protection over us and to cover us with favour is one that he hears willingly in the name of Jesus our Lord and King.

It paints for us a very powerful picture in knowing our prayers may be answered. The prayer and action of Christ Jesus reflects as truly the nature of God as the description of God's reaction to wickedness in this psalm. Just as absolute a frame of reference God's righteousness and holiness is for us to consider the wickedness of man, so also is he an absolute frame of reference for considering the outcome of this prayer, the seeking of divine protection and shielded favour. He will never allow evil to have the last word, but is unceasing in pouring out blessing for us. As surely as we ask him for protection from the world and from our sinful nature, so surely is he there for us.

May we therefore rejoice and be glad! A prayer for protection does not make it a dire prayer. We do not ask for protection because we are afraid of the world, or afraid of our old and dying nature. After all, the world's inner self is destruction! The power of the world has nothing on the King. We pray for protection not out of fear, but in joy and confidence that we remain in the world because we are sent into the world, and we will not succumb to it when we are shielded in the favour of God most high. Seek his protection, and live under his protection!