

Scripture: Psalms 34:1-22

Sermon: Taste and See That the Lord is Good

Translated by Melody Lee

### 1. The paradox of suffering

It snowed a lot in Rochester this last week. I felt like I was in a frozen kingdom. What images come to mind when you think of winter? Many literary works have expressed the trials and tribulations of life through the topic of winter. We liken life's difficult times to a harsh winter. How was your life? In fact, a season like winter is coming to us too. It's hard for us to grow without going through a cold and painful season like winter. Only those who have tasted the bitter cold of winter can be thrilled with the warm sunlight of spring. Suffering is ironic indeed. No one likes to suffer. However, suffering can also become a tool that makes our lives more humble and connects us with God. Through hardships, we find God more. Thus, while we cannot welcome suffering, we are thankful for it.

Why did David become a great poet and a great musician? It was because of the hardships and trials he constantly experienced throughout his life. His 34th Psalm tells us how precious it is to praise God and exalt Him in the midst of suffering. David testifies to the experience of meeting God in the midst of hardships and difficulties he experienced in his life. He confesses that he has tasted and known God's goodness and mercy through hardships and trials (v. 8). Most of the time we taste and know God's goodness and lovingkindness through hardships and difficulties. Verses 1 through 10 are David's testimony of God's salvation in the midst of hardships and difficulties. The words from verses 11 to 22 are the content of conveying the experience of faith that he himself experienced to his future generations. We must pay attention to the fact that salvation through suffering is the decisive link through which faith is handed down to future generations. If David tasted and knew God through the hardships in his life, shouldn't we also taste and know God through the hardships that came to our lives?

### 2. David when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech

What on earth did David go through so he asks us to constantly praise the Lord and exalt him? The head line title of the main text reads, "Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left." What did David endure that he had to pretend to be insane in front of a man named Abimelech to survive? Surviving by pretending to be crazy means surviving by enduring humiliation. King Saul of Israel pursued David, who seemed to be trying to overthrow his throne, all his life. David lived a wandering life from place to place, avoiding Saul. He had to flee to the Philistines, Israel's enemy country. The reason he entered the Philistine castle of Ziklag was because he offered himself as a mercenary to Abimelech, the Philistine king. Why did David, who was supposed to be the king of a country, have to become a guest of a rival country? Because he wasn't alone. David went around in groups with hundreds of people. There must have been two ways for the people to survive. Either live by plundering or sell yourself as a mercenary in another country. David became a mercenary and decided to sell his body. But the problem is that he was caught trying to sell himself as a mercenary and was in danger of dying. In the face of the risk of losing not only himself but also hundreds of lives, David, the leader, decided to pretend to be crazy and accept the humiliation. Imagine for a moment the leader David, drooling and talking nonsense to escape the crisis.

There will be times when our workplace is like a battlefield. Some work reluctantly while enduring various humiliations at work. Some have to work for the sake of their families while suppressing their sense of pride and enduring humiliation. However, David proudly tells the story of salvation even though it's humiliating to people. Because through that process he tasted and experienced God's goodness and

lovingkindness. When you are in the midst of hardship and trouble, the first thing you should not say is “Oh, I’m going to die.” There is no reason to say that you will die if you do not do so. Instead say, “Lord, though I cannot comprehend it through my suffering, I want to confess to you as in the psalms. May the Lord be exalted. I will exalt your name and praise you. Lord, you will deliver and answer me. Lord, I have fallen completely and can fall no further, but I will exalt the Lord.” We must confess this. We must voluntarily make this confession whether or not the circumstances of our suffering improve. Do you know why this confession is so powerful? Because this confession is a living story that those of faith have already experienced.

### 3. The Resonance of God's Salvation

David wanted to pass on the salvation of God that he truly experienced in his life to his descendants. Look at verse 11. **“Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”** David testifies to God's lovingkindness and goodness as he has experienced existentially in his own life. Because that testimony is a living story, it touches others. When you play “e” (mi) on the piano, the first and sixth strings of the guitar vibrate. We call this resonance. Strings with the same pitch vibrate when the same frequency comes. The power of testimony is resonance. The experience of salvation through tasting God's goodness resonates in the lives of people in similar hardships and predicaments.

This is why we must read the Psalms. If you don't know how to pray, read the psalms. The psalms are almost always prayers. Because the psalms are the cry to God of people who are going through the bitterness and severe trials of life. The authors of the psalms cry out to God in the midst of the hardships that have come into their lives. Sometimes they sigh, sometimes lament, and express their feelings honestly. But in the end, they always praise God. It is very difficult for those who are suffering to praise God. How can we praise God when we are about to die? When we tell God honestly about our situation, we turn our eyes away from the reality that has caught us and look to God. Prayer and praise must make us like this. Reality doesn't change, but prayer and praise help us turn our gaze from our circumstances to God.

Is your life in the middle of winter? Are severe trials and tribulations surrounding you? Praise God whenever that is the case. **“I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.”** (verse 2-4). “The afflicted / this poor man” is repeated in verses 2 and 6. This is the Hebrew word 'no (עָנִי)', which means poor, humble, lowly, weak. In verse 6, “This poor man called,” The nuance of these words is as follows. “No, even a person like me is lacking, but can't it be you?” David's humble experience resonates a lot with us and later generations.

Even if you are in low places, don't be discouraged and praise God. See the expression in verse 7. **“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”** The Hebrew word for “encamps around” refers to a state in which the army is completely surrounded and has nowhere to escape. Even if hardships come in all directions and we are hard pressed on every side (2 Cor. 4:8), the angel of the Lord surrounds our hardships and dissolves them. God sends angels to the lives of those who exalt God in the midst of suffering, and lifts up their lowly lives.

### 4. The fight against fear

The hardship that came into your life will instead become a testimony and a story that gives strength to those suffering. Don't be overcome by fear. It is fear that we must be most vigilant of as we follow God. When Satan approached Adam and Eve, he pulled them into doubt using fear. Fear is the weapon Satan most often uses to deceive us. Fear has the power to prevent us from fully trusting God and lead us into doubt. “Perfect love casts out fear, but perfect fear casts out love.” So fear drives God, the love in our hearts.

The hardship that came into your life will rather become a testimony and a story that gives strength to many lowly people. Don't be overcome by fear. It is this fear that we must be most vigilant of as we follow God. When Satan approached Adam and Eve, he brought them into doubt with fear. Fear is the weapon Satan most often uses to deceive us. Fear has the power to prevent us from fully trusting God and lead us into doubt. "Perfect love casts out fear, but perfect fear casts out love." So fear drives God, the love in our hearts.

Those who feel as though there is a thick fog in your life, please listen to David's song today. If your life is marked by a series of hardships, try singing this song with David. Listen to his song "I want to get you to join me in my song. Listen to my personal story. I was a wretched man. I was like a dog being chased in exile on the borders of Israel. I wandered weeping along the southern tip of the Israeli border. I was an international refugee. I had nowhere to go. My only refuge was the Lord. I searched endlessly in the wilderness for the Lord. But there I tasted and knew God's goodness and lovingkindness."

I pray that you, like David, will taste God's goodness and mercy in the midst of suffering. It's amazing how David used his taste for God's goodness. Taste helps us solve the most primal instinct in our lives, our appetite. Through taste, we are supplied with energy and gain the strength to live. The fundamental power that drives our life comes through eating God's goodness as food. The strength we have to overcome hardships is through tasting God's goodness and lovingkindness. Think of the percentage chance that the lions will starve. The lions are strong and never go hungry. If the lions are starving, the famine must be too severe. **"The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing."** (v. 10)

#### 5. Stories to share with the community

If David's story can resonate with our hardships today, our stories can also resonate with each other. This is the power of community. It is also the reason why we worship in front of God as a community. Our stories inspire each other. As in verse 11, especially the stories of seniors in the faith give us great strength and stimulation. **"Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."** Tell your friends, neighbors, and children the story of how you found God in trouble. Please tell us the story of God's goodness and faithfulness that you tasted and experienced firsthand through the harsh winter of your life. Because it will make the link of the transmission of faith. In particular, we should not think that simply entrusting children to the church Sunday School will pass on the faith. Tell the story of your faith directly to your children. "Children, listen to me!" Let the story of faith be shared at the table in your home.

In that respect, I would like to share my story for a moment today. When I was in college, I made a resolution to become a vocational person who lives according to God's mission. That's how I devoted myself as a missionary and a pastor, and I've lived until now. It was the "Faith Mission" that I have been training myself in front of God since I was young. The faith mission is to believe that God is in charge of every life if God has sent it. God fills and supplies needs through various channels. That's why it's a life intended to do the ministry of God according to the call without worrying (do not worry). Many people in the Bible lived like that. People like David, Elijah, and Paul believed in God's provision and lived by faith. Of course, the life of Jesus was like that too. I mustered up the courage to live as a faith mission like their lives, and I really experienced that kind of life of faith working.

When I went on missionary work in China, I voluntarily did not look at the support account in the mission letter. I wanted to experience how the life of faith works in the mission field. I wanted to experience the goodness of God. But really, the Lord worked.

Even recently I experienced this. I resigned from the church I was ministering at last June, and I was unemployed for about 3 months until I started ministering here in early September. But during that period, it was amazing how surprisingly God filled it in various ways. I literally tasted the goodness and mercy of God. Miracles happened when bank accounts nearly zeroed. A few months ago, I received an email saying that I had been selected for a church scholarship that I had applied for, and soon after I received a check mail. My wife's friend in Korea said that it was part of her severance pay and deposited it. The dormitory deposit was deposited, and through various hands, they provided daily bread. Rather, the Lord created things to praise Him in that time. I tasted and knew God's goodness and mercy.

I recently slipped on the snow twice, and people around me informed me that I needed snow tires. Actually, I couldn't afford to buy snow tires, but a few days ago, an acquaintance in Korea sent me money to use for something I needed, and I laughed when I checked it out. It was because the amount sent was the cost of the snow tires, as if they knew of my situation. Sometimes the Lord comes to me in a humorous way. A life lived by faith brings us joy, hope and courage. Just like in the hymn, "Those who live by faith will receive it from above," God never turns away from the lives of those who rely on Him and trust Him to the end.

The reason I share my story honestly is to tell you that God answers the lives of those who call upon Him. Not everyone has to have the same dramatic experience as I did. God will respond with services tailored to the circumstances of your life. What we learn from David's life is that in the midst of trials and tribulations, the only thing we can rely on is God. The Lord delivers us from fear and from tribulation. I want to encourage the lives of those who are in the midst of trials like walking through a snowstorm in a cold winter. After this harsh time, warm spring days will soon arrive.

Hardship can find any of us, such as economic difficulties, career or job change, illness, interpersonal relationships, childbirth and parenting. Are you standing in the middle of hardship now? How are you facing it? God is speaking to you today. If you are in the midst of hardship, I hope you will praise God and exalt God. Even in the hardship, God will meet me and deliver me, and I will experience his work. I hope each of you will create your own story of salvation. I bless you to know God's lovingkindness and goodness through hardships.

Furthermore, testify the story of salvation to your children, friends, and neighbors. Watch out for a neighbor who is particularly struggling, and tell them your story. Please tell us the story of salvation you have experienced. It is because only then can the hardships that seemed like uninvited guests in our lives turn into blessings. I hope that the story of God's salvation will overflow even more in the lives of our church and believers. Finally, I would like to wrap up today's message by reflecting on God's heart through verses 17-19.

**"The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all"**