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Psalm 18:2-6

My God is a Rock – Solid Rock

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Psalm 18:2-6 Common English Bible

The Lord is my solid rock, my fortress, my rescuer. My God is my rock — I take refuge in God!— God is my shield, my salvation’s strength, my place of safety. Because God is praiseworthy, I cried out to the Lord, and I was saved from my enemies. Death’s cords were wrapped around me; rivers of wickedness terrified me. The cords of the grave surrounded me; death’s traps held me tight. In my distress I cried out to the Lord; I called to my God for help. God heard my voice from God’s temple; I called to God for help, and my call reached God’s ears.

 The Lord is my solid rock, my fortress, my rescuer. My God is my rock— I take refuge in God! God is my shield, my salvation’s strength, my place of safety. Today we are talking about the promises of God. God does not promise us that we are going to be millionaires or that we are going to find a spouse or good health, but God’s love and grace endure in our lives.

There are some days when I feel like I am in the weeds and I feel hopeless and lost and alone and I have to remind myself that God’s love and grace endure in my life.

This week I made two visits to Children’s Medical Center and it doesn’t seem right that children should have cancer or need to have heart surgery. But they do. As I walked through the halls of that place I gave thanks for God’s presence in that place. I saw God in our very own Dorothy Philbrick who works at Children’s Hospital and was able to check on Charlie and Raina. I saw God’s presence in the doctors and nurses and counselors who have a ministry of healing and love for the children and families that they encounter. They have a room called Godly Play that is filled with boxes that have wooden characters of different Bible stories. I thought of children from the hospital who play with those characters and act out those stories of God loving us over and over and over again.

We live in a world where we are all about instant gratification and fleeting interests, but the Psalms remind us of the steadfast nature of God, calling each of us who are made in the image of God to be steadfast in our promises.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "God is good... all the time... and all the time... God is good!" That phrase reminds us of the steadfast nature of God. But life is not always good, people are not always good, hard times do come. But God IS always good and gives us the strength to face anything, anytime. When I am here, surrounded by this family of faith, when I am in this community as we worship God together, I feel safe. I feel life, I feel love, I feel grace. I feel like I am able to face any struggle that life may bring, because I am not alone. I am surrounded and lifted up by this community of love and faith.

We think that we don’t need grace, or community or forgiveness or love. But from the community of faith we find acceptance and love and forgiveness from God and God’s people. I remember at Rev. Kathleen Baskin-Ball’s funeral there was a children’s sermon. I could not think of what they were going to say to the many children who came up to the front of the church that day. Rev. Eric Folkerth brought out a communion cup and shared a story that Kathleen had shared with him. It was the story of Tommy. Tommy had been a part of Kathleen’s church near Wesley Rankin Community Center called Nueva Esperanza, new hope. Kathleen was inviting the neighborhood to be a part of this new church and Tommy had come. And one Sunday, Tommy had broken the communion cup. And someone tried to throw away the pieces, but Kathleen gathered every last piece up and glued them all back together. She kept that cup on the altar of that church to remind the community of faith that we make mistakes, we hurt each other, but here in this place, this is where we find acceptance and love.

God who is gracious and merciful and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love loves us as we are. By Christ’s authority we are forgiven all of our sins in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are broken apart and God puts us back together again, just like that communion cup.[[1]](#footnote-2) It is in this place, the church, where we find the strength to live out our call to lay down our lives for others and to love our enemies.

“We need one another for strength, for guidance, for correction, for collective power to stand for good and against evil and injustice in whatever forms we find them. We need places where our children will be instructed, our teens shaped, our adults molded into Christian perfection. We must be connected to one another in basic unity in order to have what it takes to keep going.”[[2]](#footnote-3) And we must always have grace at our core, not at the periphery.[[3]](#footnote-4) We are called to genuinely listen to one another and together, as a body of believers, find the mind of Christ.

"God is good... all the time... and all the time... God is good!" And in this place as we worship God together, this is a safe and life-giving place of refuge where all are welcome. I was at a workshop a few months ago and the speaker shared that the average church goer attends worship once a month. I know that I have to be here every week, but this is my safe haven. This is where I am reminded of the sure foundation of God.

I remember talking with Scott Jones while he was one of my professors at Perkins School of Theology at SMU. He and his wife had raised three kids who seemed to like to go to church and I wanted to know his secret. We all know about the reputation of preacher’s kids and I wanted to know if there were any tricks to the trade. Scott shared with me that in his family there were some family rules. For example, he and his spouse would not pay money for any one to have a soft drink before lunch. That seemed doable enough. But I still wasn’t sure how I was not going to have my kids on the straight and narrow and not turn out like those infamous preacher’s kids. The next family rule was that the Jones’ went to church. It didn’t matter if there was school work or if someone was tired. The Jones’ went to church. Each and every Sunday. So, we have done that in my family and we often tell our kids, the Smiths’ go to church. That is the family rule.

If God promises to me that the Lord is my solid rock, my fortress, my rescuer; God is my shield, my salvation’s strength, my place of safety, then I am going to promise to God that I will spend my Sundays in worship giving thanks and praise to God. That is my promise to God as I begin this new school year and I hope that it can be our promise to God as a church. Not in worship once a month, but in worship every Sunday. God is my solid rock and as I worship surrounded by this community of faith I know that I can face anything, anytime.

We read the beginning of Psalm 18 together, but Psalm continues with these words, “In my distress I cried out to the Lord; I called to my God for help. God heard my voice from God’s temple; I called to God for help, and my call reached God’s ears… From on high God reached down and grabbed me; God took me out of all that water. God saved me from my powerful enemy, saved me from my foes, who were too much for me. They came at me on the very day of my distress, but the Lord was my support…You are the one who lights my lamp—the Lord my God illumines my darkness. With you I can charge into battle; with my God I can leap over a wall. Now really, who is divine except the Lord? And who is a rock but our God? Only God! The God who equips me with strength and makes my way perfect… The Lord lives! Bless God, my rock! Let the God of my salvation be lifted high!

On the front of your worship bulletin is an image of a rock cairn. Rock cairns often serve as trail markers, helping hikers find their way as they walk through new territories. Maybe a cairn might be leading you to a new relationship or to a new path in your journey. What trail do you need marked in your life? Or maybe we need a rock cairn urging us into the world when we would rather hide where we think that we can’t get hurt. Rock cairns also are used to mark special or sacred places. Where could you build a rock cairn in your life that would help you to mark a place or a time as special and sacred?

I want to build a rock cairn right here to remind me of the joy that I experienced here Friday night. All this week we had 90 campers and volunteers at the church for Creative Arts Camp. Everyone had a blast and Friday night at the showcase the kids showed off their singing and dancing and drumming to their families. Rebekah Quicksall was having so much fun. Her face radiated joy and she was closing her eyes and raising her arms as she sang those Jesus jingles. Francie Hansen captured the moment with some amazing pictures and Tracy Wallace commented on Facebook, “I hope Bekah rubs off on us.” May we embrace the God who loves us and offers us grace and acceptance and forgiveness right here, right now.

1. Prayer of Confessionand Absolution from Nadia Bolz-Weber found here: https://www.facebook.com/theworkofthepeople/videos/10153479625075682/?pnref=story [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://christythomas.com/2015/08/04/its-not-easy-to-follow-jesus/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. http://christythomas.com/2015/08/04/its-not-easy-to-follow-jesus/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)