**How Do We Endure the Silence?**

**Psalm 115**

**By Ryan Perry**

**Scripture:**

**Psalm 115**

***[1] Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory,***

***for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!***

***[2] Why should the nations say,***

***“Where is their God?”***

***[3] Our God is in the heavens;***

***he does all that he pleases.***

***[4] Their idols are silver and gold,***

***the work of human hands.***

***[5] They have mouths, but do not speak;***

***eyes, but do not see.***

***[6] They have ears, but do not hear;***

***noses, but do not smell.***

***[7] They have hands, but do not feel;***

***feet, but do not walk;***

***and they do not make a sound in their throat.***

***[8] Those who make them become like them;***

***so do all who trust in them.***

***[9] O Israel, trust in the LORD!***

***He is their help and their shield.***

***[10] O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD!***

***He is their help and their shield.***

***[11] You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD!***

***He is their help and their shield.***

***[12] The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us;***

***he will bless the house of Israel;***

***he will bless the house of Aaron;***

***[13] he will bless those who fear the LORD,***

***both the small and the great.***

***[14] May the LORD give you increase,***

***you and your children!***

***[15] May you be blessed by the LORD,***

***who made heaven and earth!***

***[16] The heavens are the LORD's heavens,***

***but the earth he has given to the children of man.***

***[17] The dead do not praise the LORD,***

***nor do any who go down into silence.***

***[18] But we will bless the LORD***

***from this time forth and forevermore.***

***Praise the LORD!***

**Pray**

**Introduction:**

A mother and her 3-year-old son are killed in a hot air balloon crash. Two teens are killed when their car plummets off an overpass. Roughly 21 million Americans suffer from some sort of anxiety or depressive disorder. And according to the American Psychological Association suicide rates in the U.S. have risen 33 percent in the last two decades, and it is one of the leading causes of death.

As if these things aren’t bad enough, the Barna Group has published research to show that this new generation of teens, Gen Z, has the highest rates ever recorded of those who identify as atheist. And only roughly 10 percent of 20 something have a resilient faith in God that trusts the Bible, is committed to Jesus, affirms his deity, death, burial, and resurrection, and desire to live out what they believe.

**These are a few things that are happening right in our own nation.**

Yet it’s only the tip of the iceberg of the tragedy, faithlessness, and godlessness that exist within our entire world. Not to mention that we haven’t even touched on the real hardship of everyday life that we experience right around us. The physical, emotional, marital, family, and faith struggles that exist in the everyday of our lives.

And very often all these things leave us asking the question **“Where is God?”** **“Why is he not putting an end to the tragedy in our world and nation?”** **“Why must I continue to struggle with the godlessness around me?”** **“Why must I continue to struggle through my own personal mess without any glimpse of an end?” “Why is he silent?”**

This morning I want you to know that I hear you. I feel your questions, your hurts, your worries, and your longings. I have lots of questions of my own at times. But more than that, God here’s you, he knows and feels your questions, he knows your struggles, he sees your hurts, and he knows that the silence is hard.

But he has also told us in his word, through Solomon, that there is nothing new under the sun. Just as there is tragedy and hard in our world an in our lives, there was tragedy, hard, and silence that seemed to surround Israel many times throughout their history.

Yet, he did not leave them or us without hope. Instead, he has given us ways to endure what can at times feel like deafening silence. **This morning, through Psalm 115 we will see that there are six ways that, like Israel, we can endure what feels like God’s silence amid tragedy and hard.**

I pray God will us them to reorient our hearts and minds to who he is, his purpose for all things, his trustworthiness, and the future hope that we have of his blessings in this life and in the next.

With that said, how do we endure the silence?

**1. By praying for God’s glory and not our comfort. (V. 1)**

***[1] Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory,***

***for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!***

In 2008 our country entered one of the deepest recessions since the 1930’s. Stores, restaurants, and other businesses were closing like crazy and people were stressed out and unsure of how they would be able to make it in such economically turbulent times. But you know what grew during that time? **Our consumption of cheese.**

As a **Thrillist.com** article on comfort food noted,

**“In 2008…cheese consumption reached it’s highest point in decades: 33.64 pounds per capita, according to the USDA.”**

That’s almost 34 pounds of cheese per person in 2008. That’s a lot of cheese!

But why did that happen?

Because our natural reflex as human beings when things are hard, especially in a country where we value leisure and comfort, is to seek what makes us comfortable, even if it’s not good for us…**like 34 pounds of cheese.**

The people of Israel weren’t any different, which is why this Psalm was written. They were clearly enduring some hardship, most likely in the form of persecution from the nations around them, and they needed help to be able to endure it.

But instead of simply calling Israel to pray for comfort or a reprieve from the hard, the Psalmist calls them to pray that God would be working in the middle of their hard for his own glory, praise, and honor.

**Sounds crazy right? But its not.**

The problem with comfort is that it never lasts. We live in a fallen world where there will always be something **(tragedy, hardship, mess, etc…)** that will cause us to lose our sense of comfort.

But God’s glory, honor, and praise endures, and are at the very center of who he is and why he acts. As Isaiah 42:8 says:

***[8] I am the LORD; that is my name;***

***my glory I give to no other,***

***nor my praise to carved idols.***

Now you might feel like “geez, our God is a narcissist!”

But understand that God doing all things for his glory is also for our greatest good. As Ezekiel 36: 22-23 says:

***[22] It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. [23] And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD…when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.***

God has linked his glory, honor, and praise with the flourishing of his covenant people, even though we don’t deserve it. We deserve wrath, but through Christ he pours out Steadfast love and faithfulness upon us.

Why?

So that his name may be made much of in all the earth.

DON’T PRAY FOR COMFORT! But instead, remember that you want and need God to glorify himself. **Point 2. We endure the silence…**

**2. By remembering that God is Powerful and Sovereign. (V. 2-3)**

If there is one thing that I think we could probably all agree on its that we, as human, beings love power and control. We desire to choose our own destinies, make our own identities, run our own schedules, and do and buy whatever we want. **We want to be self-sufficient, autonomous.**

And when we feel or get this kind of power and control, we tend to become prideful and arrogant.

How many of you learned about the Titanic in school? I know I did. And yes, I saw the 1997 movie in theaters. **But only because a girl I liked wanted me to go.**

Anyways…

The builders and crewman of the Titanic were so pleased with their work that they said, **“God himself could not sink this ship!”**

Do you hear the pride and arrogance in that statement? That’s the same kind of pride the Psalmist is pointing to when he says in verse 2:

***[2] Why should the nations say,***

***“Where is their God?”***

The other nations that are surrounding the Israelites and persecuting them are basically saying in their arrogance **“your God apparently can’t help you, he must be a sissy.”**

Doesn’t that sound familiar? People today will often say, “How can you believe in a God who let’s so many bad things happen?” They might look at our lives and say, “You struggle just like I do, why would I want to waste my time on your God?”

Maybe there are days where your weakness, worries, struggles, feel so great that instead of others mocking you, the inner voice of the enemy says, **“Your God is not there, he will not help you.”**

But you know what happened on April 14th, 1912at roughly 11:40pm? The Titanic collided with an iceberg, and sank, taking the lives of over 1500 people.

All the boasting of the builders and crewman was taken from them in the span of a couple hours. And very quickly many of those men and women learned who does have the power and who is in control. As the psalmist says in verse 3:

***[3] Our God is in the heavens;***

***he does all that he pleases.***

Our triune God is seated on the throne of heaven. He is in the place of authority, he has all the power, and he sovereignly does whatever he pleases. **Meaning, whatever seems good to him, whatever is in line with character, and whatever will bring him glory.**

Does that mean he will always work in ways we think he should? No.

But it does mean that in the tragedies and struggles of life we need to realize that we can’t make it through them by our own strength. And even though God can feel silent he is powerfully working for his own glory and our good.

And there will be a day when he humbles those who would scoff at us and say “where is your God? Why is he doing nothing?”

So take heart, and in the hard silence remember that our God is powerful, is sovereign, and is working.

Third, we endure God’s seeming silence…

**3. By understanding that the idols of this world are dead and empty. (V. 4-8)**

***[4] Their idols are silver and gold,***

***the work of human hands.***

***[5] They have mouths, but do not speak;***

***eyes, but do not see.***

***[6] They have ears, but do not hear;***

***noses, but do not smell.***

***[7] They have hands, but do not feel;***

***feet, but do not walk;***

***and they do not make a sound in their throat.***

***[8] Those who make them become like them;***

***so do all who trust in them.***

One of my favorite rappers as a kid was **Snoop Doggy Dog.** It’s ridiculous, but true.

Now, in his 1993 hit Gin and Juice, he continually raps the following line **“Laid back…with my mind on my money and my money on my mind.”**

Even though he penned that sweet piece of lyrical genius over 20 years ago, doesn’t that still seem relevant today?

Think about what our country is consumed with. Money. Retirement. The right job. The right spouse, family, vacations, house, **running after the best and most comfortable life this physical world can offer.**

Think about this: We, **as Americans, spend $10.7 Trillion dollars** on our stuff every year so that we can be comfortable. But if we are honest, we need to admit that many of the things we think we need are probably nothing more than lifeless idols.

They are like the gods of the nations who are made with silver and gold. They cannot speak, they can’t see, they can’t smell, and they can’t walk. They have no power. Why? Because they are lifeless and dead.

And if we put our hope and trust in the **lifeless and dead idols** of the world the Psalmist says in **verse 8** that we will become like them.

Oh sure, the people around us look like they have it all. The shiny new car. The perfect house, 401K, family, kids, etc…

And when things are hard, and God feels silent, it seems so easy to run to the things of this world to make us happy. But if that’s what we’re living for, if that is what we are chasing after, **not only will it not satisfy us, but it will lead to death.**

As Ecclesiastes 5:10 says:

***[10] He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.***

Or as 1 Timothy 6:9 says:

***[9] But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.***

But, when the hard and silence come, let’s join with the apostle Paul, who in the hard of being imprisoned, penned the following words in Philippians 3:7-8a:

***[7] But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.***

Even if things are really hard and God feels silent, Jesus is still better, more satisfying, more valuable, and more life giving than the gain of this world **which leads to death.**

Point 4. Instead of trusting in idols, we endure the silence of hardship…

**4. By trusting that God is for us. (V. 9-11)**

***[9] O Israel, trust in the LORD!***

***He is their help and their shield.***

***[10] O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD!***

***He is their help and their shield.***

***[11] You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD!***

***He is their help and their shield.***

The Psalmist has had the people pray that God would glorify himself. That he is sovereign, powerful, and will humble the pride of the nations because their idols are lifeless, powerless and will lead to death.

And in response to those realities he now sends out a call to all of God’s people everywhere, the Israelites, the priests (house of Aaron), and anyone else, Israelite or non-Israelite who fears God, **to put their full trust and hope in the Lord.**

But he doesn’t just tell them to trust in God. He also gives them the reasons for that trust.

First, in verse 1 the psalmist tells us that he is a God of steadfast or unending love and faithfulness. **God’s love and faithfulness to and for his people will never end.**

Second, in verses 9-11 the psalmist has Israel repeat three times that the LORD, God almighty is their **help and their shield.**

Now, for us, in a land where we don’t face a lot of famine or war it’s hard for us to get the weight of these verses. When we think of the word **help,** we generally think of things like raking a neighbor’s lawn or comforting a friend through an emotional crisis.

Or the word shield might make us think of our friendly neighborhood police man or even that that tax commercial for **US Tax Shield.** Have you heard it? Their motto is…

**“Get the peace of mind you deserve. Get protected. Get the shield. US Tax Shield.”**

The psalmist, however, has something far bigger in mind. God is not merely comforting us, helping us with a home project, or giving his people financial peace of mind.

He wants the Israelites and us to know that even though it may not feel like it now, our God is literally supporting us, carrying us, and sustaining us through what can feel like the darkest valley we have ever been in.

As David wrote in Psalm 23:4:

***[4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,***

***I will fear no evil,***

***for you are with me;***

***your rod and your staff,***

***they comfort me.***

And he is not only the one who protects us physically, but more than that he is the one who protect us from the arrows of the enemy that would cause us to otherwise lose faith and hope. As Paul writes in Ephesians 6:16:

***[16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one…***

So the psalmists call to us is to put our full hope and trust for this life and the next in the God who loves us, is faithful to us, is sustaning us, is protecting us, **and as our next points says:**

**Will bless us. Point 5, we endure the silence…**

**5. By living in the hope of God’s future blessings. (12-15)**

***[12] The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us;***

***he will bless the house of Israel;***

***he will bless the house of Aaron;***

***[13] he will bless those who fear the LORD,***

***both the small and the great.***

***[14] May the LORD give you increase,***

***you and your children!***

***[15] May you be blessed by the LORD,***

***who made heaven and earth!***

Often throughout the history of Israel they faced many hardships, wars, and persecutions from the surrounding nations. **And often these hard situations persisted over a span of years and sometimes even decades.**

I know for me it would have been very easy in that kind of situation to say **“God has left us.”**

But Israel knew that despite these persecutions God would act in accordance with his character and his promises. Why? **Because, as we said, he is working for his own glory.**

And if he is working for his glory than he will not only help and sustain his covenant people, but he will bless them and make them flourish, **both in this life and in the next.**

But I know what your thinking? **“Pastor Ryan, I feel like I am doing everything, but flourishing.” “All we see around us sometimes is hard, tragedy, and destruction.”**

And I get it. But very often we say these things because we are defining human flourishing the way the world does.

According to the National League of Nursing, Human Flourishing is: **An effort to achieve self-actualization and fulfillment within the context of a larger community of individuals, each with the right to pursue his or her own such efforts.**

This makes human flourishing all about us being able to do and pursue whatever we want. **But is that God’s definition of flourishing? No.**

As 2 Peter 1:3 says:

***[3] His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,***

God’s definition of flourishing, even in the hard and the silence, is walking in holiness as we experience an abundant, full, and everlasting life that is **only** found in him.

And we do this with the knowledge that he has called us to share in and experience his glory and excellence, in this life, but more than that in the life to come. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:17:

***[17] For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,***

So we endure the silence and hard by knowing, believing, and living, out the present blessings of this life; namely, the abundant life of joy and obedience that is found only in Christ, and not in our circumstances, **as we wait, with hope and trust, for the future blessing of eternal glory that will one day be ours when we are with our God forever and ever.**

**Finally, we endure the silence…**

**6. By submitting to God in praise and worship. (16-18)**

***[16] The heavens are the LORD's heavens,***

***but the earth he has given to the children of man.***

***[17] The dead do not praise the LORD,***

***nor do any who go down into silence.***

***[18] But we will bless the LORD***

***from this time forth and forevermore.***

***Praise the LORD!***

Everything that the psalmist has said previously is affirmed right here in these final verses. The heavens belong to God as he sits in the place of authority and power. He has given the earth to us to keep it and proclaim his glory. The dead things of the word, both physical and spiritual, whether idol or person, cannot nor will not praise God.

But as God’s covenant people we can bless him and praise him because he is our help, he is trustworthy, and he, as our God, will bless us in this life and the next.

Does that mean that things will always be easy? No. Does that mean that God will always take away your hard? No. Does this mean that evil and tragedy will be eradicated this side of heaven? No.

But it does mean that we can endure the hard and silence with the knowledge and hope that God is **committed to his glory**; which ultimately means he is committed to our present and everlasting good and joy.

So hope in him and trust him. And no matter what comes your way, even if it feels dark, praise his holy name from this time forth and forevermore until he returns.

**Let’s Pray.**