OBJECTIVES
1. Know the desperation David experienced despite his anointing by Samuel.
2. Feel the inspiration of God’s provision for David through family, friends and even malcontents.
3. Believe that God’s help is coming and thank him in advance for his mercy.

Scripture: Psalm 57

Memorize: Ps. 57:3 I cry out to God most high, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me.

Drama: David the Homeless Hero

Motivation: Labor Day is the holiday that means summer vacation is over and…yes…school has begun. School is not one of the best memories of my childhood, though I want to assure the teachers in my hearing that it was my issue, not those who instructed me. Though I was a successful student, I lived for the warm weather and the special activities of summer.

We’ve heard a Psalm from David this morning that reflects much worse circumstances than the start of school. In fact, David was running for his life, hiding in a cave in hopes that Saul would not find him.

1. David was in a desperate situation. (I Samuel 22:1)

Despite at one time being the most popular man in the land, David’s picture was now in every post office on top of Israel’s “most wanted” list. This was David’s situation when he wrote Psalm 57. David had honored God all of his life up until this point. He enjoyed the distinction of being filled with God’s spirit. But despite David’s spiritual superiority, Saul, the now wicked king, was winning! David’s coronation as king of Israel was still ten years away. David was consumed with eluding the paranoid King Saul.

What had David lost since his “good old days” in Saul’s court? (Chuck Swindoll)
- Wife (Michal did return later, but was never part of his life after that)
- Family (Returning to them would have alerted Saul to his location)
- Job (David was an unemployed soldier with no veteran’s benefits)
- Counselor (Samuel, who had anointed David, died while he was on the run.)
- Best friend (Jonathan never saw David again after alerting him to Saul’s wrath)
- Self-respect (feigned insanity before his Philistine enemies at Gath)
- Security (If Saul found him in this cave David surely was going to die)

Some of you sitting here have experienced significant losses. As we study Psalm 57, remember this list of David’s losses, who wrote these words.

As David came to the Cave of Adullam only Saul seemed to care where he was. Besides being very vulnerable, the cave was a foreboding place for David to inhabit.
Look at this picture. Is this where you’d like to spend an unpredictable length of time alone? (Show cave photo.)

Psalm 142:4 No one cares for my life is the way David sums up his feelings in another Psalm written while he lived in this cave.

David had been the warrior darling of admiring Jewish women. Now he had no admirers of any kind. He didn’t even have companions. We don’t know how long he had to stay in the cave in solitude but we know David began there alone. The start of the first verse of Psalms 57 reflects the honest emotions we would expect of anyone in this predicament, but before he even begins verse 2, David begins to express confidence that the trouble will pass:

Psalm 57:1 Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.

By verse 2 of the Psalm

2. David’s song expressed cheerfulness and confidence.

Psalm 57:2-3 I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me; God sends his love and his faithfulness.

How did God show his love and his faithfulness? He sent people to David. The cave was certainly not a pleasant place, but it was much better with people around. I Samuel 22 says that when his brothers and his father’s house heard David was close by, they went to him. These were the same brothers who poked fun at David before he fought Goliath. These brothers now came to his aid. We also know that David’s mother and father showed up. Can you imagine the sacrifice of his folks to relocate from their established sheep ranch to a cave in order to support their fugitive son?

One resource that God has blessed Valley with is people...thousands of them. If you attend this church and feel alone in the crowd, reach out and connect with one of the many groups available at this time of year. Don’t worry about being the only new person, because there will undoubtedly be other new people in whatever Community or service group you might try. If it all seems a bit overwhelming, come to the Welcome to Valley class where we’ll help you sort it all out.

Non-family members also found their way to David’s cave. Many of these men were in debt, the misfits of society. We can see why David would have been comforted by family, but why did God send David a bunch of losers? This band of men gave David a job! Using his military leadership skills, David became “captain” over them. David put his own depression aside and gave himself to training this group until they were “David’s mighty men.” He started with 400 men and ended up with 600. David could have complained about these malcontents showing up. By recognizing the opportunity to train them, David was doing something he was good at. The focus this required led
David to put his problems aside. He was also practically preparing for potential confrontation with King Saul.

If you’re discouraged and alone, maybe you should throw yourself into service here at Valley. I guarantee you the same pay that David received for leading the mighty men. But clearly, the benefit David received was more than financial, and the same will be true for you. E.g. Dennis Wry spends a day with me to keep me company and support me on a long speaking engagement.

Psalm 57:5 demonstrates a key characteristic of spiritual maturity in the face of adversity. We can still think about others.

**Personal trouble doesn’t give us license to focus exclusively on ourselves.** It’s appropriate to share our burdens with others and to ask God to solve our problems. But if that’s all we think about we’re ignoring the fine example that David gives us when he writes.

*Psalm 57:5* *Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; Let your glory be over all the earth!* David wasn’t just asking for personal deliverance. He maintained his vision for God’s fame over all the earth. I believe that’s a big reason David was chosen to be the king of Israel when it reached its zenith in world prominence many years later. God knew that King David wouldn’t use the power of Israel to build his reputation, but rather to proclaim God’s glory.

E.g. Missions giving at Valley has held up despite the challenging economy of the past few years. Missionaries have asked us for more help because other sources of funding have decreased. Because of your faithfulness we’ve been able to do that. As you continue to fund world outreach despite your circumstances, our church will show God’s glory over all the earth.

3. David’s song expected victory and vindication.

*Psalm 57:6* *They dug a pit in my path – but they have fallen into it themselves.*

Do you remember from the monologue how King Saul hoped that by sending David into battle he would be killed by the Philistines? This ploy never worked. David won all his battles with the Philistines. Even when he unwisely put himself in their hands in the city Gath, he escaped unharmed. But what happened to Saul? His life ended when he was wounded by a Philistine arrow and fell on his own sword rather than facing torture by his enemies when captured. Now understand, this had not yet happened to Saul when David wrote Psalm 57, but David’s reference to his enemies being victimized by their own treachery reflects God’s prophetic inspiration in this writing.

Part of your personal discouragement might come from the fact that others who are not living for God seem to have the upper hand. They seem to be “blessed” at least by the world’s standards. Verse 6 tells us that God will address our enemies in his time. We don’t necessarily have to do anything to contribute to their undoing.
Psalm 57:7 *My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music.*

Why did David repeat that his heart was steadfast? I think he needed to remind himself to be steadfast. While David’s words are written with integrity, I’m sure some reassurance was needed at that moment to believe what he said. Remember, the pressure that David was facing was real. At this moment clearly it was Saul who had the upper hand, not David.

David then resolves to sing and make music. This is what he did to comfort Saul when he was troubled. Now he needed to do it for himself. Saul needed comfort because of his guilty conscience. David needed comfort because of his difficult circumstances.

How many of us sing and make music by ourselves? Not many of us. For most of us this statement from the Psalm is a strong encouragement to come to church and worship God when everything else seems hopeless. Part of us wants to stay away from church when we are discouraged. In fact, I recently read that for the first time in many years high unemployment in this country has not motivated people to return to church. David is suggesting that we keep coming, so that we can praise God with the support of others who believe in him.

It may appear that everyone at church seems happy, so why should we go when we’re not? You know how everyone smiles at each other around here, unless someone has just stolen their parking place! A newcomer to Valley who had experienced some serious losses told me she sat in her car in the Valley parking lot for some time, struggling over whether or not to go in. It’s not the first time I’ve heard about personal battles about going to church within fifty yards of the building. Many people who come to Valley are motivated by difficult circumstances. It just doesn’t look that way because we try to be a church where people can be encouraged. Take David’s advice. When you are going through a tough time, resolve in your heart that you will continue to worship and praise God corporately. If you don’t, you’ll be tempted to practice Christian Atheism, the name of a new book described this way in Christianity Today magazine…

*I’ve always believed in God, just not enough to trust him with my whole life…My selfish Christian Atheist view was that God existed for me, rather than I for him. If he’d do what I thought he should, I’d trust him more. If he’d come through for me, I’d give him more of my life…but anytime God didn’t meet my expectations, we had a problem. God created me in his image. I returned the favor and created him in mine.*

Christian atheism might be a strong term to describe people who won’t fully trust God with their lives. But isn’t this an accurate way to describe what’s really going on when we only honor God during the good times?

Verses 8 through 11 end this Psalm with a firm resolve to praise God despite difficult circumstances. Remember, David is writing this song *before* his parents showed up, *before* he had the opportunity to train his mighty men and *before* he saw the light at the end of the tunnel. All David knew when he wrote this Psalm is that he had no place else to hide and that Saul could discover him at any moment.
Rather than acting like a Christian atheist, David reflects the attitude expressed by Bible scholar Alan Redpath…

There is nothing – no circumstance, no trouble, no testing – that can ever touch me until…it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment.

David includes the nations in his thoughts about praising God in verse 9. He’s not focused on praise only for his personal benefit. He makes clear his vision that God isn’t just for solving his problems.

Psalm 57:11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

No Christian atheism for David! His vision is that God’s glory be seen over all the earth. If you remember nothing else from this sermon, remember David’s example of being concerned for God’s reputation in the whole world even though God doesn’t seem to be doing very much for David at the time.

Closing prayer: God, Psalm 57 helps us to see that David was a man after your own heart. He had confidence in your grace in his life that carried him through the darkest and most fearful experiences. May the same be said of us!

Communion: David experienced loneliness in the cave. Most of us experience loneliness at some time in our lives. The “cave” experience of Jesus was on the cross, when even his loving father seemed so far from him. Never was Jesus so alone. Never were his circumstances so difficult. Yet…Jesus told us to remember and celebrate the implications of this terrible event in his life, along with the victory that was his when he rose from the dead.

If you have personally experienced the saving grace of God in your life, if you know you have a personal relationship with him, please join us in taking these elements of the Lord’s Supper. When the tray is passed, take both bread and cup. Eat the bread at your own initiative, but please wait until all are served so that we can remember his blood shed for us together.

Deacons please come.

The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Reminder: Pick up verse card as you leave - New service times start next week!

1. Ps. 142: David on his face before God completely defeated.
2. 142: 4-5 I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing through! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to me. Then I pray to you, O Lord. I say, “You are my place of refuge. You are all I really want in life.
3. Ps. 57: David on his knees before God, developing a vision that he could come back.
4. Ps. 34: David is standing before God, ready to moved ahead.
5. Why we need encouragement:
6. Three reasons — the third is No one is here to help me. I am alone as my enemies plan against me. Gossip is the final sting. Job. 24:12