

SHELTER: UNSHAKEABLE
Sermon written by Martha-Jean Fitch
July 26, 2020

TEXT: Psalm 16

You remember the story of the Three Little Pigs don't you? I bet you could even help me tell the story. Mother pig sent the three little pigs out to build their own homes. Pig number one built his house out of – straw. Pig number two built his house out of – sticks. And then pig number three built his house out of brick. Along came the big bad wolf who demanded that he be allowed to come into their homes.

Pig number one said – what? “Not by the hair of my chin-ee-chin-chin!” Well, of course that is NOT what the wolf wanted to hear – so he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down.

Well, now the world of pig number one had fallen apart – so he ran over to the home of pig number two. The wolf demanded entrance into his home. He said, “Little pig! Little pig! Let me come in!” And pig number two said – what? “Not by the hair of my chin-ee-chin- chin!”

So the wolf huffed and he puffed and he blew his house of sticks down. Pig number one and pig number two ran over to Pig number three's house. Remember, pig number three built his house out of bricks so it would stand the test of time.

The wolf followed the other pigs over to pig number three's house and tried one more time, saying, “Little pig, little pig, let me come in.” And pig number three said – say it one more time with me: Not by the hair of my chin-ee-chin-chin!

So, the wolf huffed and he puffed and blew and blew. But this time the house did not fall down because the house was solid with the bricks and could withstand all that shaking and blowing. The wolf tried and tried until he was almost all worn out.

But not to be outdone – he decided to climb up on top of the roof and sneak down the chimney to try to enter the pigs' home. And to his surprise, he landed into a pot of hot boiling water.

In re-telling this story, Pastor Tony Evans says, *“If you're attached to your straw life, when stuff starts to blow, you're going to crumble. If you're attached to your stick existence, when stuff starts to shake, you're going to fall apart. But if you're part of a brick, unshakable kingdom that has been built by Almighty God, I don't care what is falling apart around you, you won't be falling apart with it.”*¹

We are living in a world right now where there is, as the song goes, “A whole lot of shaking going on”. There are wolves that are huffing and puffing and trying to blow our house down, if you will. There is civil unrest and economic instability and a division within the country, politically. And the greatest wind that seems to be blowing and shaking all of our

homes, is the pandemic. Everything that we are going through in this year 2020, has been described as the “perfect storm”. And it is not just affecting us – but people all over the world. It is very true the saying: “We are all in this together”.

The question is – “How are you handling it all?” Are you like the first two pigs that built their lives on the straw and sticks – and when the world is blowing and shaking – you respond by crumbling and stumbling and falling apart? Filling yourself up with fear or doubt? Or are you standing on a firm foundation – unshaken in your faith?

We have been talking about King David throughout our sermon series and how you can trace the stories of his life in many of the Psalms. There were all sorts of storms David faced throughout his life. From facing the giant Goliath, to being on the run from his father-in-law Saul – fearing for his life – hiding in a cave in the wilderness and being separated from his family, his friends and the worshiping community. Then he became king – only to have his son Absalom turn against him and try to steal the throne away from him. And so, he was on the run again! And that doesn’t even list all he went through. There was a whole lot of shaking going on! You would think that David would start to lose faith – to want to give up.

But at some point, David sat down to write out his song in Psalm 16. We don’t know exactly what is happening when he writes this particular psalm. Some have guessed it was in a time of a lull in his running away from Saul. I almost wonder if it could be at a time when he is sitting in the cave and is asking for God to be his refuge and shelter. Whatever the occasion, what we do know is that he is facing some sort of storm and he is sitting down to express his confidence in God. I kind of think that he is like pig number 3 – he’s building his house on the firm foundation of faith and trust in God, so that he won’t be shaken in the storm.

Let’s hear now, Psalm 16 – and be sure and listen for those words of faith and trust.

JANET FOSTER READS PSALM 16

“Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to you for refuge”. When troubles and trials shook the life of David, he knew where to turn...and it wasn’t a place – but was a Person! He knew God to be his shelter in the storm, a refuge in times of trouble. In fact, instead of focusing on his troubles – counting them one by one – he turns his focus on God and remembers who he is, knowing it is on God that will get him through the storm.

David looks at God’s character and reviews all his blessings he has in God. Reading from the Good News Translation, we hear David say: “You are my Lord – all the good things I have come from You.” And then in verse 5: “You, Lord, are all that I have, and You give me all I need; my future is in Your hands. How wonderful are your gifts to me!” Other versions say, “You Lord, maintain my lot”...or that God takes care of our circumstances. Think about it...David had been on the run for so long – going from hiding place to hiding place, never sure when Saul or later Absalom would find him and attack. His circumstances weren’t good. And yet he was able to praise God and claim that God was his help and hope. He looked beyond his dire circumstances and was able to count off his blessings and see God’s hand at work.

I think we often do just the opposite, don't we? We can so easily fall into pity parties, especially when going through hard times. Or we take and list all our complaints and point out what we don't like or we don't have. I read a devotional recently by a pastor named Chris Mendez, who asked the question, "As you communicate through social media – (or to friends and family) – are you choosing to spread blessings or to spread fear and negativity? And when you are in the midst of a difficulty, what do you focus your eyes on – what you cannot do or what God can do?" Let me ask that one more time – and let that question sink in: "Where is your focus – on what you cannot do – or on what God can do?"²

For David – he was able to keep his focus on God. No matter what storm came his way – whether it was a sin of his own making – or a wolf attacking his house, he knew to turn to God. Listing all of God's characteristics and His blessings would lift him up and give him courage for the facing of his storms.

And David would not let the hard times he was going through steal his joy or turn him away from worshiping God. Oh, but we do that don't we? We go through a storm and we get down and depressed – and we often say, "I just don't feel like worshiping today. I can't find any time or have any energy for reading the Bible or praying." But David wasn't like that. Even in his pain, he would pour out his heart to God and then add words like "yet I will trust You – or *but* I will praise You."

In that same devotional I read from Chris Mendez, he said: "What response flows from your heart and lips when you are facing an uncertain or painful situation? What are you allowing to steal your song?" When we are intentional to worship, even during the storms, it takes our focus off the situation and puts it on the greatness of God and on his power and majesty. We always need the volume of our worship to be higher than the volume of our situation.³ Think about it – is the volume of your worship higher than the volume of your situation? Your answer to that will make a big difference in your life and the strength and the joy you have.

Psalms 16:7-8 are some of my favorite verses. First, David says in verse 7, "*I will bless the Lord who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me.*"

I find it so amazing how God works. I told you a couple of weeks ago about how when I am having trouble sleeping, I have to turn my focus on God and use the alphabet, listing God's characteristics or His blessings – and that helps me be at peace and go to sleep. Well, here's what is *also* interesting to me about sleep. Sometimes, when I am wrestling with a problem OR a sermon I don't know how to write, for example, I have discovered that if I just lay the issue at the feet of Jesus and go to bed – God "instructs me in the night" as it says in verse 7 – and by the next morning, I have the answer or the direction I am supposed to go. I love how the Holy Spirit can speak to us and guide us, whether we are awake or asleep.

Verse 8 came to mean the world to me some 6 years ago, when I was in the hospital for about 16 days. I was there with a severe headache and they were running all sorts of tests trying to figure out how best to help me. It was definitely a time when my life was shaking. I was so discouraged. And then I received a text on my phone from Hope Nelson. It was just a notation of this verse, Psalm 16:8. I had to get my Bible out to find out what it says: "*I know the Lord*

is with me; I will not be shaken, for He is right beside me.” Just in reading those words, I realized how much I needed to claim and confess that God was right there with me, in the middle of my bad circumstances – and because of His presence, I didn’t have to be shaken. In remembering God’s presence and power, I was not defeated or depressed even though my circumstances really hadn’t changed. So, I made an intentional decision that I was going to focus and talk more about God’s promises than the problems I was facing.

Oh – there is so much more I could share about this wonderful psalm – but time has run out. I challenge you to read it again this week, maybe in a variety of versions and ask yourself – “At this time of history, with this storm we are *all* going through, what is the message God is telling *you* through this psalm?”

Let me end with just one more thought. I received a message from a friend of mine last week on Facebook - someone who has gone through her own days of shaking, especially during these days of the pandemic. Her words of encouragement remind me of David in his psalms. Think about them for your perfect storm. They go like this:

Make sure you test positive for faith.
Keep your distance from doubt and isolate yourself from fear.
Trust in God through it all.

May it be that as we go these days, even if things do not turn out as we expected – or if bad news comes knocking at our door, that we will not be knocked down, but will remain unmovable, unshaken and steadfast in our faith.

RESOURCES

¹Tony Evans, “*Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*”. Moody Publishers, 2009, page 182.

²Chris Mendez, “*Unshakeable Faith*”. Devotional in the YouVersion App by Hillsong, day 2.

³IBID, day 3.

BENEDICTION

As we close this time together, remember:
God is always with you. No matter what you face,
no matter what trials or hardships come your way,
God is your rock and your fortress.

Go, trusting in God to sustain you – in Jesus Christ to hold you –
and the Holy Spirit to comfort and guide your every step.
God bless and keep you always. AMEN