Mondovi: Our Savior's, Gilmanton & Montana: Salem United Methodist Churches
11.1.2026, 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, All Saints Sunday, Rev. Hyuntae Kim, Ph.D.

Grace Even When Things Don't Go My Way
Psalm 34:1-22

Let us pray: Father, today we receive and feed on the words of your love, the love with which you loved us first. Through your Word, help us to know more deeply the rich taste of your grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

A pitcher was having a terrible game. He gave up three home runs in a row. The manager, furious, ran out to the mound, grabbed the ball, and yelled, "That's it! You're out of the game! You can't throw a decent pitch to save your life!" The pitcher looked at him, completely serious, and said, "Skip, it's not my fault! I'm throwing great pitches. It's those batters! They keep hitting them!"

Sometimes in life, things don't work out even when we have done our very best. At other times, we make mistakes that cause things to go wrong. Whatever the situation, it can be absolutely miserable.

Recently, the Milwaukee Brewers made history by winning their first World Series championship. But before that victory, they went through a painful experience.

In Game 4, they were just three outs away from winning the championship. But in the bottom of the 12th inning, their third baseman made a throwing error. That mistake helped the opposing team come back and win the game. Just imagine how much that third baseman must have blamed himself! But the Brewers didn't give up. They came back the next day, won the game, and became World Series champions. I imagine that must have been a tremendous comfort to that player.

Psalm 34 is a psalm of praise that David wrote out of his experience in a desperate situation. He was running for his life, filled with fear, and uncertain about his future. The title of this psalm reads, "Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away, and he left."

The Philistine kings were referred to as Abimelek, just as the Egyptian kings were called Pharaoh. According to 1 Samuel 21, the king in this account was Achish, king of Gath.

When Saul tried to kill David, David went to Achish. He was hoping to receive help from the Philistines, but when their response was not what he had expected, he pretended to be insane in front of Achish, even letting saliva run down his beard, and managed to escape with his life.

Instead of hiding his painful experience, David turned it into a testimony of God's faithfulness and preserved it in a song.

In verse 1, David says, "I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips" (NIV). The word "always" certainly carries the memory of what had happened to him before. To extol the LORD means to praise him highly and honor him above all else. But when David was in trouble, where did he first turn for help? He went to Achish, the Philistine king.

If Achish had responded the way David had hoped, David might have continued to rely on the Philistine king. But through this frightening experience, David learned an important lesson: human help has its

limits, but God's faithfulness never fails. Sometimes, when the people we depend on cannot help us, we learn to place our trust more fully in the LORD.

David not only praises the LORD "at all times," including the most shameful and desperate moments of his life, but in verse 2, he also says, "I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice." David is inviting those who are afflicted and those who have lost hope to hear his testimony, find comfort in God's faithfulness, and rejoice with him.

Verse 3 says, "Oh, magnify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together" (ESV). David wants to say that God's work is so great that we cannot fully comprehend it. We should rely on him alone, trust him, and wait for him.

Having realized that human beings are not the ones to rely on, David sings in verse 4, "I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (NIV).

Although David was afraid of the circumstances he was facing at the time, the words that best describe the condition of his heart before God are found in verse 18: "crushed in spirit." Let me read verse 18: "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Today, on All Saints Sunday, we remember those who have gone before us in faith. They also experienced times of joy and sorrow, strength and weakness, hope and fear. Yet through all those seasons of life, God's love remained faithful. And today, as we remember them, we are reminded that the same God who was faithful to them is still with us, especially when our hearts are broken.

The Hebrew root behind the word "crushed" in this verse is "daka." It describes someone whose spirit has been deeply broken or crushed. In Leviticus 2, we find the grain offering, one of the five major offerings. It was an offering made with fine flour. Although the Hebrew word for fine flour is different, the image of fine flour can help us understand what it means to be humbled and broken before God. David had experienced such deep fear and humiliation that his spirit felt completely crushed.

In the book of Job, Job repeatedly insists that he has done nothing wrong. But when he encounters the glory of God, he is deeply humbled. In Job 42:6, he says, "Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job's experience reminds us of what it means to stand humbly before God.

The same Hebrew root also appears in Isaiah 53:5, which speaks of the suffering servant: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities." As Christians, we see this prophecy fulfilled in the suffering of Jesus Christ. He suffered for our sins and gave his life for our salvation.

Even in our brokenness, God's power and grace can be revealed. David and Job both experienced God's faithfulness in the midst of suffering. And through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we see the greatest expression of God's saving love.

When we reach the very bottom, we often realize how much we need God's help. And even in those moments, God's grace is still with us. The LORD does not abandon us when we are broken. Instead, he draws near to us with his love and mercy.

David eventually appears as one of the two key figures in the opening verse of the New Testament, Matthew 1:1, which introduces Jesus: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham." Abraham is remembered as a man of faith, and David as a man who experienced God's amazing grace.

Verses 5 and 6 say, "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles." David is telling us that when we turn to the LORD with humble and trusting hearts, we can experience his grace and find freedom from fear and shame.

Are any of you afraid today? Bring your fears to the LORD and place your trust in Jesus. Are any of you carrying a sense of shame? We cannot free ourselves from shame by our own strength. Adam and Eve were ashamed and tried to cover their shame with fig leaves, but that did not work. Just as God clothed Adam and Eve, Jesus covers our shame with his grace and leads us into a new life. Only God can lead us from shame into glory.

Verse 8 says, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him." When we come to Jesus with humble and trusting hearts, we begin to experience the goodness of the LORD for ourselves. In the process of being delivered from suffering, our faith becomes something our very bodies remember.

Verses 9 and 10 say, "Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing." To fear the LORD means to seek him and earnestly pursue him. It means acknowledging his lordship in every situation.

Even young lions may go hungry when they fail to catch their prey. But those who seek the LORD will lack no good thing. People who pursue money remain hungry for more money, no matter how much they acquire. The same is true of shopping. The more we shop, the more we hunger for things that are even more beautiful and stylish.

No matter how difficult our circumstances may be, we can turn to God's Word and seek his guidance. Even in our suffering, God can work through our experiences to bring healing, hope, and new life to us and to others.

David was anointed to become king when he was still young. But before he finally became king at the age of thirty, he spent years being pursued by Saul. Through these difficult years, David learned to depend on God more deeply. Even his painful experiences became part of his testimony of God's faithfulness.

That is why David says in verse 11, "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." The best way to teach this to future generations is to set an example through our own lives. We need to show them what it looks like to continually meditate on God's Word and have it on our lips, to worship God, to seek him and acknowledge him even in times of trouble, and to seek the Lord's will and obey him in everything.

Verse 19 says, "The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all." Here, the righteous are those who seek to live in a right relationship with God, trusting him and following his ways. Being righteous does not mean that we will never face suffering. Even those who faithfully

follow God experience troubles and hardships. But the LORD hears their cries and remains faithful to them.

Verses 15 and 17, which come earlier in the psalm, tell us how this grace comes to us. Verse 15 says, "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry." And verse 17 says, "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles." When we cry out to God in prayer, even in our deepest struggles, we can trust that he hears us and responds with his grace and mercy.

Sometimes, when our hearts are troubled, we try to overcome our fears and shame through our own strength. But we do not have to carry these burdens alone. Instead, we can become still before God, bring our struggles to him, and trust in his grace. In his time and in his way, God can bring healing and renewal to our lives.

We can see an example of God's grace in the story of a woman who came to Jesus with a heart full of love and devotion. Some people criticized her for what she had done. But Jesus defended her and honored what she had done. In Matthew 26:13, Jesus said of her, "Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." The Lord himself turned what others criticized into something worthy of honor and remembrance.

We do not have to wait until we face great suffering to grow in faith. One of the most important ways God shapes our lives is through his Word. Reading the Bible is not always easy. Sometimes God's Word challenges us and reveals things in our hearts that we would rather not face. But God's Word does not come to destroy us. It comes to transform us. Through Scripture, the Holy Spirit helps us recognize our weaknesses, turn away from sin, and grow in faith.

I believe that when we open our hearts to God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to shape our lives, the same power that was at work in the early church can also work in us and through our church today.

Today, as we remember the saints who have gone before us, we are also reminded that our own lives are becoming a testimony of faith for those who will come after us.

My prayer is that someday, on All Saints Sunday, when our families, descendants, and loved ones remember us, they will remember how we trusted God, even in difficult times. May they remember that we sought the LORD, walked in his grace, and shared his love with others. And may our lives become a beautiful offering to God, shaped by his Word and filled with the Holy Spirit. May we be remembered in this way. Amen.

Let us pray: God of grace, when we face difficulties, help us to offer ourselves to you with humble and trusting hearts. When our hearts are broken, draw near to us with your love and pour out your abundant grace upon us. As we face life's challenges, help us to trust in you and seek your guidance through your Word. Teach us to fear the LORD and to taste and see that you are good. And may our lives become a testimony of faith, so that we may pass on your love and grace to the next generation.
In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.