**Rock My World**

**Psalm 34: Taste and See: How Do You Fear?**

**OPENING**

* Think of a time when you experienced creative worship. You can be broad minded when you think of this. Tell the group about it. Did you like it? Did God?
* What do you think about creativity in worship?
* Psalm 34 is an acrostic, meaning that each verse starts with a successive letter of the alphabet, basically.

“There are thirteen such passages in the Scriptures, and whenever we meet with them, we are asked to give great attention to them, and to put marked emphasis upon them.”

(Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, p. 180)

David is saying that what he is writing is important and that we should pay attention to it.

* Read the Psalm together. Break it up by verses 1 to 7, 8 to 14, and 15 to 22.

**PUTTING PSALM 34 IN CONTEXT**

Usually, headings found in the Bible are not actually part of the text. They are inserted by the translator to help us find our way. In this case the phrase, “Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away” (ESV) is part of the text.

* Read 1 Samuel 21:10-15. Achish here is believed to be Abilemech. To get the whole context you would have to read 1 Samuel 20 and 21, or even more. David and Saul, the current king of Israel, ran hot and cold. Sometimes, in madness and jealousy, Saul wanted to kill David. At other times he depended on him or tried to befriend him. David faithfully served Saul and served him well. But, at times, David fled for his life. David and Jonathan, Saul’s son, had a deep friendship. Jonathan had just determined that Saul intended to kill David. He fled. David went to a priest at the tabernacle for help and then fled to Gath, which you just read about. David had been anointed to be the next king of Israel. Many times he could have killed Saul, but he refused to kill the one that God had anointed (1 Samuel 24:10). This situation went on for years.
* In the sermon on Psalm 27 we talked about “waiting on God.” Does David’s life situation look like waiting to you? What would your prayers look like if you were David? What can you learn from David’s life to help you wait on God?

**OBSERVATIONS FROM SUNDAY’S TEACHING**

This is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. Yes, David is fleeing for his life, feigning madness and he writes, not a lament, but praise! This likely pictures a Thanksgiving offering, but it could have been a celebratory banquet. Another story that may contain this offering is the story of the Prodigal Sons (Luke 15:22-24). A thank offering would happen at the temple (or tabernacle). Someone would bring a sacrifice and some of the offering would be eaten by the offerant along with family and friends. The rest would be burned or eaten by the priests and their families. It would generally be done to celebrate a blessing from God.

* When you read verses 1 to 7 can you picture David calling people to thank God?
* Consider verse 3 and 5. How do the worshippers respond?
* How does verse 7 relate to David’s life situation?
* Picture yourself in that congregation. How would this affect you?
* Is David believable?
* Are personal prayer times acts of worship? How does worship connect to faithfulness?

Consider verses 4 and 5. Summarize this as “this was my experience. It could be yours to.”

* David’s fears were real, even terrifying. They did not go away, but carried on for years. Read Psalm 23:4. What changed, attitude or circumstance? How did David’s attitude change? How did he see through the darkness of fear to see something else?
* Read 2 Kings 6:15-17 again. Faith is the ability to see in the dark. Has God ever given you a flash of insight in a dark moment?

**LOOKING THROUGH THE TEXT**

Do verses 8 to 14 sound similar to our sermon series last November? In verse 7, fear takes on a different meaning. Who is feared now?

These proverbs answer the question, “How can I change my attitude?”

* The proverbs of verses 8-10 emphasize that God gives good gifts to His children. When David was fleeing he needed supplies and defence (rescue and refuge, vv. 7,8; hunger and want, vv. 9,10). Read 1 Samuel 21:1-9. What did God provide? Where, exactly, did it come from?
* Why is it important that we tell our stories of God’s faithfulness?
* Wise living is part of the way we “Rock our World.” We can fear our circumstances or God. Which is better? Why?
* How did David demonstrate verses 11 to 14 in his relationship with Saul? Did David try to honor Saul? How can this direction help us? How would people often behave in this situation?

Consider verse 15, “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous” and, 16, “The face of the Lord is against evildoers.” Does God care about you and me? How much?

* This Psalm of Thanksgiving continues to praise God. What does David praise God for here? Make a list. Does David repeat himself? How emphatic is he?
* The last verse, 22, breaks the pattern of the Acrostic (alphabetical arrangement). This makes it stand out, indicating that it is important.
	+ Why is it important that “the Lord redeems the soul of His servants”? This promise is not only related to eternity, it applies today. The fear of God shapes us to withstand the fears of life.
	+ The Gospel takes these words and fulfills them completely. While David wrote this Psalm, God uses it to look forward to something even more meaningful than the challenges David faced. How does it feel to know that in the Gospel “none of those who take refuge in Him will ever be condemned”?

**PRAYER (consider breaking up into small groups of 3 or 4, either as couples, or as just men and just women)**

* This is a Psalm of praise. Think about the situation that led David to write the Psalm. Can you praise God over struggles in your life?
* Think of a “good gift” that God gave you this week? Tell your story.