

“When I Call”

Sermon outline/slides are available [HERE](#).

Video of Sermon avl here: <https://youtu.be/fWghQrUxUQc>

[Psalm 4](#)

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!

You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

² O men,^[a] how long shall my honor be turned into shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah

³ But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.

⁴ Be angry,^[b] and do not sin;

ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah

⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the Lord.

⁶ There are many who say, “Who will show us some good?

Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!”

⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.

⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Transcript of Sermon:

Pastor Thom Rittichier

I'd like you to take your Bible and turn to Psalm 4 this morning. We've been in a series called "When God is Big". And He is big in the Psalms. As a matter of fact, God enters into all of the experiences of our lives, the heights of joy and the depths of despair. My heart overflows with a good thing, the heights of joy. And the depths of despair, from the ends of the earth I call to you. When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

This morning, I want to start here with this. It was posted, "Do Not Enter". But I just opened the door and walked right in. I've been doing it for years. And when I say years, I mean like 12 or 13 years. I just show up at the door and walk right in. I've been doing it so often that I hardly even noticed the door, let alone the sign. "Do Not Enter". So when I walked in, sure enough, there was a private meeting in progress. And I had to spend a long time humbling myself, attempting to explain why I just walked in, a lot of apology,

a lot of saying "I'm sorry" and asking for forgiveness. But I really couldn't undo it. I just walked right in and where I walked right in was the lab in the hospital. I just walked in. I been delivering, carrying messages and going there for 12 years and never even noticed the sign that was posted. That was a little rough. And, you know, my office, which was down the hall from that, had sets of signs-"Do Not Enter", "Meeting in Progress"- that I would put on both doors. I had a front door, to the hallway of the hospital and a back door, for the staff. I put out signs when I had meetings in progress. And when I had conference call meetings. But I just walked right in that day. Well, this morning, I want to tell you that we are just going to walk in on a meeting in progress. It is a conference call. And it's a conference call that God wants us to walk in on.

It's Psalm 4 that we look at this morning. Psalm 4 is a prayer meeting. It's a prayer meeting between God and King David. Do you recall Athanasius, you remember hearing about him the last couple of weeks? Or maybe you've never heard about him before. He was a fourth century church leader who was very influential, whose influence is even felt today. Athanasius talked about the Psalms. And he said, the Psalms speak for us. Most of the Scriptures, he said, speak to us, the Psalms speak for us. Because in it, we see in action, this meeting in progress with God, a conference call. Now it was, on my part, very inconsiderate to walk in on such a meeting in progress. But from God's point of view, this is really needed. And I think you'll agree with me,

Psalm chapter four, David says a couple of times, "When I call, When I call". So we walk in on praying in progress, notice it with me, Psalm chapter 4 verse 1. "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer! Oh men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain, empty words, and seek after lies? Selah But know that the Lord has set the godly apart for himself. The Lord hears when I call to him. Be angry, be troubled, be violently shaken and do not sin. Ponder in your hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, 'Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!' You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in security." This is a prayer in progress when God is big. It is a prayer meeting God wants us to be in on.

There is a very observable fact here, this conference call was a model that the Apostle Paul told about, that we should enter into also. A model of a prayer session going on. In Philippians chapter four, verse six, the Apostle Paul says this, "Be anxious for nothing". Don't be stirred up inside by a mind that goes one way and goes back the other way on a situation that's difficult. Like when you need to be focusing on this but you keep coming here and thinking that over, stirring up the emotion. "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God." Now, if you're familiar with that verse, like many of you are, you know this has a result, right? Hopefully that result may be playing through your mind right now. And this goes on in your heart. As a result, we're going to come to that this morning. But right now, I want you to know that I'm convinced the Apostle Paul saw in the Psalms,

this conference call with David and God, this prayer going on in progress, this praying being done. He's saw the model that he calls us to. That's what we look in on in Psalm 4.

In Psalm 4, David does this: 1) Appealing to God- Elohim, the generic name for God, which refers to him in his strength. This was used by all kinds of people, people who had no relationship with God, people who were pagan and alien from him, still referred to him Elohim-the strong one. David appeals to God in His strength, by prayer, generally talking. 2) Appealing for men, people. And he does it with supplication-in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving-and that's exactly what David's experience of prayer does. 3) Appreciating our Lord-O Lord, O Lord, he says, referring to him as the I Am, with thanksgiving. It becomes for us a "To Do" kind of experience, Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God.

Now I want us to pick up a note here, and it's something that a couple of other preachers have noted. It's a note on this Psalm that is significant. James Montgomery Boice, a pastor in Philadelphia said this about the outline. My outline above wasn't his outline, but it's very similar, because it was the outline that David went by, and the outline that the Apostle Paul said is a "To Do" for us. I want you to hear what Pastor Boice said about this, "We are going to study this Psalm according to this obvious three-part outline. But I need to say at the outset that what is important about the Psalm is not the outline but rather what happens to the psalmist as he prays." David in progress of prayer, what happens to him in his experience. "What happens is that he changes." He moves from anxiety, do not be anxious about anything. "He moves from anxiety because of his accusers to quiet trust in God, which is to say...It does him good." Interesting, centuries before, another pastor in Geneva, centuries ago, spoke about this in Calvin's Commentaries. And he said, "The distress of which he (David) speaks, in my opinion, refers not less to the state of his mind than to the circumstances". His state of mind was in distress. "For David's heart was not of such an iron mould as to prevent him from being cast into deep mental anguish by adversity. The happy result of the prayer of David was, that resuming courage."

We're going to look at this in experience, praying in progress, which the Apostle Paul calls us to enter into, just like David has experienced here. It's being lived out by a person in conference with God. And what he experiences here is what the Apostle Paul calls us to. It's exactly it! So we're going to follow it. Yes, this outline but not for the sake of the outline, but for the sake of being in on it. It is a meeting which doesn't say Do Not Enter but which is in neon lights calling us to Enter In, appealing to Elohim-the strong one, known by all kinds of people across the planet, people who are even pagan have this idea of a strong one-the one upstairs-the one in charge-that's how they refer to him. This entering an appeal to Elohim David says and he says it initially with an urgent call. That's where we begin, with David and an urgent call. "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness", Psalm 4:1. Answer me O God of strength. Answer me. You know, nothing moves us to pray like need. Have you noticed that? It's like, yeah we pray. But all of a sudden, there is this stress going on. I remember my wife talking about this in reference to the Imprecatory Psalms. Do you know what Imprecatory Psalms are? Imprecatory Psalms is a big word for those Psalms that say stuff like this, knock their

teeth down their throat God, knock their teeth down their throat. Whoa! Does that sound very Christian? Does that sound godly? My wife was struggling with those kind of Psalms in her life. Until one day, when Laura was in the heart of Marion, at night. She got this call with Laura, who was going to college, and was in Marian at night. And, you know, we're living in Hartford City and before that, Fairmount. You know, this is a small town, where you walk outside and nearly everybody knows you and say things like, How you doing? And how's your uncle? And what about your grandma? And now she gets this call from Laura, who says, I just came out of the library. And there's some guy who's following me as I'm heading to the parking lot. And you know, suddenly my wife understood the Imprecatory Psalms. She got it, she got it. And entering into the experience of conference call in progress with the strong one, well, nothing motivates like a need. David had a need here. He's gonna talk about it in a moment, he's going to reference the need. We have a need, and I have been earnest this year concerning this National Day of Prayer, which been around for a long time, that we avail ourselves of this privilege. We use it.

David, before he talks about the need, talks about an evident history that he has experienced, it's very evident, his history with God. He calls God by name, he calls him, O God of my righteousness. That's how he references this strong God, who's known throughout the world, even by pagans as being the one upstairs, the one in charge, not known personally, but referenced to in that way. David referenced this God as the God of my righteousness. That's an interesting title here that he uses, an interesting caption for God, the way he spoke about him. And, you know, we kind of understand this from the New Testament insight that God gives us about David's thinking here, what's going on in his mind. Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts or imputes, charges to the account. This is an accounting term, this is something that will happen. When there is an electronic deposit that goes on, it gets credited to your account in the records that the bank holds of your financial standing. That's what the word counts or imputes, as some of the translations give it, that's what this word means. And what David is talking about is the blessed position, the happy, enviable, desirable place of the one to whom God counts to their account, gives to their credit, righteousness apart from the works, apart from things you do that might please God. God gives a standing of being right with Him. He credited to our account. And David speaks about that, in the Psalms, the Old Testament. Blessed are those whos lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count, not impute his sin. What a tremendous thing. This is the evident history that God and David had together. God had imputed to David righteousness apart from what he did, apart from his works. It was a blessed position. And David talks about that in connection with his sin. He's got a right standing with God credited to his account, without considering what he did, God forgave his deeds, his sins were covered. The Lord did not impute, charge against him, his sin. Now for you and I, this is a possible experience and possible, evident occurrence in our lives. As a matter of fact, if it's happened to, you know it from your personal history, you know it, you realized your sin before God and that God is going to judge you for your sin. And you trusted Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, to pay for your sin, His burial, His resurrection is the demonstration that God accepted Jesus payment, raised Him from the dead, and you, trusting that for your right standing before God, have imputed to you this righteousness,

apart from what you've done. He's credited to your account. You are in the blessed position of lawless deeds forgiven, sins covered, being a man or a woman against whom the Lord will not count his sins. That folks is the gospel. That is it. That's the good news. Just this week, it was recounted to me about a woman who for 15 years had attended church, but never knew that it was about this. This is what it's about, being absolutely freely forgiven of our sin by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and have being given to us this right standing before God. But boy, when she found out, the joy and the rejoicing of knowing Jesus Christ, the interest that she had suddenly gained in what the Bible said, even stuff like the Old Testament. Absolutely amazing. You see, folks, this became part of her evident history. You and I have to have it as a part of our history too. This is where we can experience confident praying before God, life changing praying before God. It comes no other way. So when David speaks about this, he calls God the strong one of my righteousness. And he adds, You, this is now personal experience about his abundant history, Lord You have given me relief in my distress. This is his experience, that David had. Well, you know, there's a song. Have you ever heard this song? "In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief." Have you ever heard that song? Amen. It's a song about the sweet hour of prayer. If not an hour, 15 minutes, 10 or 5. Let me tell you, it usually takes some time to get the relief. David, when he's talking about this, uses terms here that his life was kind of in a tight spot. That's what distress refers to. He was jammed into a straight and narrow place. And he felt the pressure of that. And the relief is that God made room for him. God expanded the borders, the relief, so that the pressure was backed off. David says, from his experience, you have Lord, you have given me relief when I was in distress.

And then David makes this petition, a confident plea. Now, hear my prayer. And when he talks about prayer, he uses the word for supplication. Hear my supplication that intercedes, it talks to you about other folks. It includes my life, but it's interceding for them. That's the exact word that he uses for prayer here. Folks, this is the appealing to the strong one, by prayer, that David was in progress. It's going on. And this is what we're directed to enter into, in our experience. Now, going on, David begins to plea for men. Now I need to let you know that there are some folks that say all the sudden David kind of changes the thing here, and he starts talking to people, because if you notice, verse number two it says, "O men, how long", and he begins to talk about men, but I want you to know that, by what David just said, and what he says later, what's going on here is that he's in conference with God, praying in progress here. And he's doing it by supplication. Just this morning, I was standing looking in the mirror. You know, I do that before I come here, just so you know, I do. I look at the mirror, the way I look when I get up in the morning, you wouldn't want to see me. So I was looking into the mirror. And as I was doing the thing that I need to do, which some people call human repair, okay, that's kind of a good thing. I've had others refer to it as maintenance. Yeah, I was doing that. And as I was doing that, my mind was flipping through different people, some here, some that I've known from other places. And as I was doing that, I was saying, O Lord, and just running through my mind and heart, the situation that those people were in and calling out to God for them, while I'm doing human maintenance, which was needed in front of the mirror. Okay, that's what David does here. He brings these people up. And he's supplicating here. He is laying them out before God in a manner in which he's talking to them. I look at this with me, chapter four, verse two, he

says, O men, and then he asks two questions. And with these two fitting questions he uses a word-Adam, it is the word for man. You know, that was what Adam's name meant, man-but he doesn't use that word. He uses a different word that stands in for special people, a particular persons. You know, they say about this Psalm, Psalm 4, that it doesn't have a title like Psalm 3. It does have a title. It's something that David experienced and wrote about, that he wanted set to music. That's what the title says. Look at chapter four, it's before verse one in our English Bible, "To the choirmaster, the chief musician: with stringed instruments." To the one who is over the stringed instruments. This is a composition of David's, from his experience, what he wrote. Now, if you look at Psalm 3, which Dr. Stewart talked to us about last week, Psalm 3 has that. And by the way, these headings are in the Hebrew Bible. This is an English input. But this is in the Hebrew Bible. This is a psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son. So we know the historical context of that, we know when David composed this and what was going on.

When we look at this psalm, some people say it's the same, there's no certainty of that. What happens here is so different, seems different. But what David is doing here is, when he talks about "O men", he could have put in names because it's a word that refers to special people. Oh, Absalom, running through his mind, in front of the mirror. Oh, Lord, I'm thinking of Absalom. But he could have talked about others. He could have been talking about Abner. Do you know who Abner was? Abner was the head of Saul's military, who David ran into some problems with. He could have been talking about Joab. Do you know who Joab was? Joab was the head of David's military who replaced Abner when David became king. Joab was the one who killed David's son, Absalom. The one David told not to harm Absalom and he did intentionally. So David could have been saying, O Absalom, or O Joab or O Abner or a whole bunch of others, like that guy who was throwing stones at him all the time. Remember that?

So he could have been talking about any of these and what he's doing is, he's referring to these people and he asking two fitting questions. "How long shall my honor be turned into shame?" How long shall I be dissed in your site? He goes on, "How long", question two, "will you love vain words", what's empty. How long, as he thinks of these folks in his heart. How long will you be buying in, Absalom, to these vain and empty words? Oh Abner, how far are you going to go? Oh Joab, why? And that's the kind of thing that he's doing here. He is supplicating. He's laying out his thoughts and his heart. Do you notice that when you pray? This is the experience of praying we're being told to do by the Apostle Paul, supplication. How long will you seek after what's not true? How long will you be tied up in these interests that keep you away from God and His truth? Do you have anybody to pray for like that? How long will you be tied up in these things that are getting your attention and deceiving you from the truth? Do you have anybody to pray for like? I do. I do. Enter in.

Calling with confidence here he says this. "But know that the Lord has set apart", the Lord has done this. He gives two notes on this. The Lord has set apart the godly. The Lord has a distinctive purpose for the godly. He's set apart the godly for himself. And the godly refers to those who have this righteousness, given to them from God, who are now turned towards God. Just like that woman that I heard of yesterday and she was talking

about this. Turn towards God, that is the godly, the Lord set apart the godly for himself. And thus, David says with confidence, the Lord hears when I call him, he hears. Do you ever go before the Lord in prayer and think, Oh Lord, I know this isn't such a big deal or Lord, I know it's just my seeing what's going on in my heart. The Lord hears. He hears when you and he hears because he has set you apart, in Christ, for himself to hear when you call. That's what we are being encouraged to enter into. And David begins to change, he moves from this urgent sense of uncertainty to the Lord hearing me when I call.

Then he intercedes with five definite things that he asks for. Verse 4, the word is translated in a lot of versions as angry but what it refers to is quivering inside. It is an emotional shaking that goes on and he is talking to the Lord and asking this for these people. Experience your trembling, experience what's shaking you up, and don't sin. Ponder in your heart, on your bed. Abner, ponder in your heart, on your bed, Absalom, Joab, whoever you put in there. Have you ever noticed how life can kind of get busy during the course of the day? And then at night when you lay down, it's kind of like you remember what happened?-Oh, I said! Oh, I needed to do this. And I did that!-the quiet time. I remember my brother talking to me about, before he came to Christ, his running around and doing stuff, then at night, it would kind of all come back to him, what he'd been doing. Yeah, Lord, use that time in people's lives. Use the time that they commune in their own hearts, on their bed and be silent. Then offer the right sacrifice come to God the right way, praying that they come to God the right way and put your trust in the Lord, he says, that they put their trust in the Lord. Interceding pleas, appealing for men, supplication. That's what David is going through here. This is what the Apostle Paul calls us to.

And this finally, appreciating I AM. Do you recall what our focus this year? Our focus as a congregation this year is to be trusting I AM. That is like so biblical. That is like so biblical. Amen. That is like so biblical during this time in our lives personally, in our lives culturally, in the conflicts that we're experiencing, in the distress. I've had a lot of folks sit across from me talking about the unrest in the nation, asking me questions, Pastor, do you think this is going to go away? I AM, appreciating Him with thanksgiving, coming into the picture of your life, God's promise, I AM-always and forever what you need. This name, Lord, Yahweh, is my name to all generations, forever. It's what the Lord said. And we are called to enter into appreciating him with thanksgiving. The light of your countenance, the light of your face upon us, Lord. He says, lift up the light of your face. God's gracious, kind, mercy, let it register with me. Even though he says, Many are saying, who will show us good? Is there any good coming out of this? This is the worst time in the nation. I heard President Obama, on his 60 Minutes broadcast saying, he's not certain that our democracy is going to survive. Uncertainty. God's, I AM presence, Lord, show the light of your face. Numbers talks about this, which is obviously what David is thinking of. May the Lord bless you, make his face shine upon you. And that's the request here, with thanksgiving. More joy, you have put in my heart, O Lord. You have put more joy than they, when they're grain and new wine abound. That's what you've given me. There is more joy in this appreciating who the Lord is for us now. You know, I was raised on a farm. We were farmers. And I remember this. I remember the end of harvest season, when the corn was coming in. It was usually on a weekend because my dad worked another job. And he farmed also. And it was usually on a

weekend that he finished the harvest. And I remember his disposition and his up betweenness, just the happiness of this. So much so that every year we celebrated harvest. For years, my wife used to have the harvest celebration at the church, when we lived in Merrillville, Indiana, which was not a very agricultural spot. And then we moved out Littleton, IL and had one with the church there. And she said, Wow, you know, I didn't realize that this really had a connection here. It made sense then, harvest time. So what David is saying, in his experience, is this joy in his heart was like when they have their grain in and their new wine done, but it's more. It's more in quantity. It's longer in duration. And I need to tell you, by the time that the next week end rolled around, the celebration of harvest, my upbeat dad's attitude was just not so much as it had been. Let me just put it that way. Not so much. Yeah, this endures, this doesn't slide away. Remember Phillipians 4, verse six, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God." It has a result. Remember what the result is? "The peace of God." Notice what David says here, Psalm 4, verse eight, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, have made me dwell in safety." There is this peace, the peace of God that passes all understanding will guard your heart and mind. This is experiential. This is for you to be going through. This is what we're called to, prayer in progress. Enter in. This is where we're to be, guarding your heart and mind, in Christ Jesus.

Father in heaven, I come before you and this is not theory. It's not an outline. It was David's experience that changed him, where he begins in his cry and where he ends with his enjoyment. Lord, that this would be a Psalm to us, O draw us near to you, draw us near. Draw us near because you have set aside those in Christ for yourself. And you hear when we call, in Jesus name, amen.