



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Pentecost 2

June 22, 2025

Salvation Belongs to the Lord

Psalm 3

¹ O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; ² many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God."

³ But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. ⁴ I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill.

⁵ I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶ I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

⁷ Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.

⁸ Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people!

Can you imagine it? Your own son is trying to kill you. Because the threat is real, you've been forced to abandon your home in search of some place to hide. And he is not alone. Absalom, King David's son, had gathered a host around him, including fighting men, leaders of the church, and David's own chief counselor. He had also gained the support of a good portion of the people, decrying his father to them as heartless and uncaring, while convincing them that he cared about them more and would give them a fairer hearing than his old man. This is the backdrop to today's Psalm. David was on the run from his own son.

Having fled to the hills, he climbed the Mount of Olives. He was in tears, barefoot, and his head was covered in shame. He hadn't slept well, he constantly feared for his life, and he was disgraced.

Who else but his own son could do this to him? Elsewhere he writes, "My close friend in whom I trusted . . . has lifted his heel against me" (Ps. 41:9). "It is not an enemy who taunts me . . . it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me . . . But it is you, a man my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng" (Ps. 55:12-14). Oh, the anguish; Oh, the deep hurt that is inflicted when one who is close to us takes advantage of the relationship and drives the dagger where it can do the most damage!

Where do you go for healing from such injury? The invisible wounds are the hardest to cure. But David knows where to turn – to the only remedy for this kind of pain.

He cries out to God: "O Lord, how many my foes have become! Many are rising against me! They're saying that not even You can save me."



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Pentecost 2

June 22, 2025

But, you see, David knows this isn't true. His head was bowed as he climbed Olivet, bowed in shame and disgrace, bowed in tears wrought by defeat, by betrayal, by hatred from a child of his own loins, a child he raised in a king's palace, with all the luxury any son could hope for. Was this his thanks? The Prodigal Son may have wanted his father to die, but at least he didn't take action bring it about! Absalom was actively seeking to take his father's life and had convinced his followers that God had abandoned the father in favor of the son.

But, as I said, David knew this wasn't true. Whatever Absalom and his people thought they knew of God, David knew differently. David knew that God was a shield surrounding him, and that ultimately, God would lift his head and restore his honor, for his glory was in God.

God's answer to David's cry, David's prayer, is readily apparent already midway through the psalm. For suddenly, the language turns from anguish and disgrace to peace and vindication.

First, he declares that he has gotten a good night's rest. "I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me."

As he continues, you can see that his whole attitude has changed – from one of failure and defeat to one of triumph. "I will not be afraid though many thousands stand against me. The Lord has sustained me and He will prevail!"

And now, instead of crying out from shame and sorrow, he calls upon the Lord to arise and come to his aid. The whole focus has shifted from the damage caused by others, and perhaps his own sense of futility and impotence, to one that signals victory – not attributable to himself, mind you, but to the God in whom he trusts. Quite apart from being one for whom there is no salvation in God, David calls out, "Save me, O my God! Strike my enemies on the jaw and shatter their teeth! You are holy, they are wicked, You are the victor, they are already overthrown. Why? Because salvation belongs to the Lord and His blessing will be upon His people.

In the end, the Lord would defeat David's enemies and restore him to his throne. This victory would not come without cost, however. For Absalom, David's son, was killed as he attempted to escape David's men. Fleeing on his mule, his head got caught in a low-lying branch, and there he died.

And here we see that David shares some traits with another one of his sons – the one acclaimed as such in our Palm Sunday texts: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David – for David did not rejoice in the death of his son Absalom, but wept, saying, "O Absalom, my son, my son." This son had tried to kill him! David had every right to dance on his grave. But he never forgot the love he had for his little boy, though he had grown up to be a wicked man. In much the same way, Jesus wept over the unbelievers in Jerusalem and prayed from the cross, as His enemies, who had demanded His death, mocked Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Pentecost 2

June 22, 2025

Like His father David, Jesus never forgets the love He has for us. A nursing mother may forget the child at her breast, but the Lord says that He will not forget you [Is. 49:15]. “Behold,” He says, “I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me” (Is. 49:16).

In His unfathomable love, He exercises astounding patience toward us. St. Peter writes: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Yes, you and I were once enemies of God, but in His forbearance, He has been reconciled to us by the death of His Son [Rom. 5:10]. This reconciliation, this bringing together of two opposing sides, is not our doing; it is the gift of God [Eph. 2:8]. God had every right to dance on our graves, but because He loves us, He chose instead to pay the penalty of our sin and offer us reconciliation and peace at the cost of His own blood. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Beloved, hate is too easy. David could have hated Absalom, but he didn't. God has every right to hate you, but He has chosen instead to love you. In a day when the prevailing attitude of our society is to hate those who oppose us, we do well to note that this is not God's way. God loves even the most wayward child. David loved his son. Jesus loves you. Who is it, do you suppose, who wants to inspire hatred in you? Please don't give in to hate, for Scripture says that he who hates his brother is a murderer and a liar (1 John 3:15; 1 John 4:20). Is that what you want as your legacy? How's that for an epitaph? “Here lies so-and-so, a hater, murderer, and liar.”

If you have enemies – and I'm sure you do – pray for them, don't hate them. If they're a threat to you – and they may well be – pray that God will save you. And, while you're at it, pray that God would save them. For isn't that His desire? He said through His prophet Ezekiel, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezk. 33:11). God's desire is that the wicked turn to Him in faith and be saved.

And don't think it's your job to save them. Salvation belongs to the Lord. It's your job to tell them about the Lord so that they can believe and be saved. So tell them. After all, how can they believe in Him if they've never heard of Him? [Rom. 10:14b] Tell them. Love them like David loved Absalom. Love them like Jesus has loved you. And may God use your witness to save them just as He has saved you. For salvation belongs to the Lord. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen