

In the LORD I Take Refuge

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 December 2023

Preacher: Colin Horne

[0 : 00] Before the preaching of God's Word, take your Bibles again and turn to Psalm 11. Psalm 11. This is the Word of God.

In the Lord I take refuge. How then can you say to me, Flee like a bird to your mountain? For look, the wicked bend their bows.

They set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart. When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?

The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men. His eyes examine them. The Lord examines the righteous.

But the wicked and those who love violence, his soul hates. On the wicked, he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur. A scorching wind will be their lot.

[1 : 06] For the Lord is righteous. He loves justice. Upright men will see his face. Amen. Let's hear the preaching of God's Word.

Back when I was in college, one of my best friends at that time, he got married over the summer. And so I needed to fly back to Ohio from California for that wedding. And the whole trip to get to the wedding ended up being a major fiasco. I missed my first flight.

And not like running to the gate to miss your flight. But like sitting at home realizing 24 hours after the flight left that I had missed it. I had to get another flight to get myself there.

And now my ride, who was also in the wedding, couldn't pick me up from the airport. And so I missed the rehearsal dinner. I had to drive through the night from the airport in Indy to northern Ohio. And it was a terrible, long ordeal.

[2 : 03] In the middle of the night, I also ran into something that I had never encountered before. It's not that big of a deal to many of us. But the weather phenomenon of a Midwest thunderstorm.

Now being from California, we were just lucky to get some rain. And so when I encountered this thunderstorm that I had never experienced before, my mind started going worst case scenario.

Am I about to run into a tornado? Do all thunderstorms precede tornadoes? It's pitch blackout. I can't see anything. The guy in front of me just got off the highway.

Do I need to get off the highway? So I did the one thing that I knew to do at three in the morning in the middle of nowhere. I called my parents. I fled to my parents for refuge and woke them up in the middle of the night and said, I don't know what I've encountered here.

I don't have a smartphone. I can't look at the weather. I need your help. I fled to my parents when I was in danger, like a five-year-old running into his parents' room and tucking his head under the covers, burying it there in fear, but feeling safe because he was with his parents.

[3 : 14] I fled for refuge to them. It was the only thing that I knew. To whom do you flee when you are in danger? To whom do you flee when your soul is in danger?

When your soul is troubled? We need Psalm 11. We need God's inspired, authoritative word to us to give us direction, to tell us where we are to flee, to whom we are to flee, and then to tell us why.

To tell us why we should do that. And so that's the substance of our sermon this morning, to see that it is God that we flee to, and then to see why it is God alone that we flee to.

So let's read those first three verses again. Let's read even the title of it to see the setting in some sense, and let's see that it is indeed God that we flee to and no one else.

So Psalm 11, beginning with the title there. To the choir master of David, In the Lord I take refuge. How can you say to my soul, flee like a bird to your mountain?

[4 : 21] For behold, the wicked bend the bow. They have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

So David wrote this Psalm. We see that there in the title. And we don't know the specific circumstances that he wrote this Psalm in. Many times we actually do read something of why he wrote a Psalm, especially when he was in trouble.

There are times that he writes a Psalm because his very son is pursuing his life. There are times that he writes a Psalm because Saul, who preceded him as king, is seeking after his life.

Time and again, David found his life in danger. So he was very well qualified to write this Psalm for us. And where did David turn in his danger?

He turned to the Lord. He found his refuge alone in the Lord. But not with any help from this companion of his. In verse 2, he has someone with him.

[5 : 28] And he has someone who's speaking to him. This companion who is saying, flee like a bird to the mountain. David, your life is in danger.

You need to consider safety. You need to consider security. You need to take refuge in the mountain. And David's response is, I already have my refuge.

And my refuge is in the Lord. My refuge is in him. And his companion says, but the city is, it's come under attack. The foundations are going to be destroyed.

David, what good is it for you to stay? You need to flee. I imagine that David's companion had the best of intentions. That he wanted the king to be protected.

You don't want to see your king going out to battle and dying. He is the king. We need him. And so he says, run, take refuge in the mountains. And David says, no, I am safe in my God.

[6 : 30] So where do you go when you're in danger? Where do you flee to? Psalm 11 teaches us that we run to the Lord. We find our refuge in him.

That's our answer here from God's word in Psalm 11. We find our refuge in the Lord. We find that we are safe in him. Now, not necessarily safe in all the ways that we might think of safety.

Was Jim Elliott safe when he went to the jungle of Ecuador to share the gospel with the Wayodani?

Was Diedrich Bonhoeffer safe in Germany when he was preaching the gospel against the Nazis?

Was Stephen safe standing before the Sanhedrin in the book of Acts? God's people are not always physically safe in this world. There are times that God's people are physically safe.

That God protects them. There are other times that he doesn't protect their physical safety. We are not always safe in the ways that we most naturally think of safety.

[7 : 36] But we are always safe in the ways that matter most. In John 10, Jesus describes our safety in this way, beginning in verse 27.

My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. So spiritually, we are always safe in the Lord.

Whatever trials we face, whatever flaming arrows that the enemy has ready to shoot in the dark, our souls are safe in the Lord.

For the Christian, he's our refuge. We run to him. We entrust ourselves to him. Psalm 11 teaches us this in the first three verses. And then Psalm 11 gives us really good reasons why we run to the Lord.

[8 : 41] Why we only run to him. We run to God because of all the ways that he is not like us. Here is someone who can really help me.

Here is someone who is able. Here is someone who can help because he's not like me. In Psalm 146, we're told, Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man in whom there is no salvation.

When his breath departs, he returns to the earth. On that very day, his plans perish. Man cannot help us. Not in the ways that we most need to be helped.

Psalm 11 shows us this. Look to the Lord for your help. Find your refuge in him because he is not like us. So we're going to see three ways that this is true in our text this morning.

Three ways in which we see the Lord is not like us. Here's the first way. God resides in heaven. God resides in heaven.

[9 : 50] Look just at the beginning there again of verse 4. The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. So on earth, we find the chaos of sin.

We find the wicked hunting after the righteous. We find evil bent on destruction. It doesn't take long if you read the headlines, if you scroll social media to see sin and its effects in our world at work.

It doesn't take long to find man is shaking his fist at God in rebellion, or even more subtly, simply ignoring God altogether, just going our own way, calling good evil and evil good, without even making mention of God.

On earth, sin is all around. It swells like the raging seas, and it seems as though it is ready to overwhelm us, to swallow us, to drown up the righteous. And so what are we to do?

Or maybe the question at times is, where is God? Where is God in all of this? And then we get this simple reminder here in Psalm 11.

[11:01] The Lord is in heaven. The Lord is in heaven. He is not on earth. And that is such an important distinction for us, because it's from heaven that the Lord then looks down on mankind.

The Lord is high and exalted. The Lord is seated on his throne. He's described as physically above the earth and its inhabitants.

And that drives home to us his greatness, and his majesty, and his might. That drives home to us his power and authority over all that he has created.

So God holds all authority. He rules over all that he has made. He rules over all that he's made by his hand on this earth. He reigns from heaven.

He reigns with authority from heaven. It's for this very reason that Ecclesiastes 5 warns us, Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God.

[12:06] For God is in heaven, and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few. God is so very much unlike us, in that he resides in heaven.

We dwell below. We live on the earth that he's created. And so in that sense, we remember our place. We remember our place before God.

That's what we think of with Isaiah. In Isaiah 6, when he came into the very presence of the Lord, Isaiah remembered his place. And for good reason.

This is a detailed account in Isaiah 6 of a mortal man entering into the presence of the immortal God. It filled him with humility. It filled him with awe.

It filled him with fear. But Isaiah isn't the only man to enter into God's presence and have that kind of response. Maybe lesser known, but Ezekiel had a very similar response.

[13:12] If you want to turn over to Ezekiel 1, we'll begin reading in verse 26. And Ezekiel 2, when he entered into the heavenly courts, he saw the glory of God and he was humbled.

Ezekiel 1. Beginning in verse 26, this is the word of the Lord. This is a long description that Ezekiel has given of the heavenly scene.

And now he turns his gaze to the very throne in heaven in verse 26. And above the expanse over their heads, there was the likeness of a throne, an appearance like sapphire.

And seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. Verse 27. And upward from what had the appearance of his waist, I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around.

And downward from what had the appearance of his waist, I saw as it were the appearance of fire.

And there was brightness about him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around.

[14:24] Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. So Ezekiel is describing to us what God's glory looks like and it is magnificent.

And what is Ezekiel's response? And when I saw it, I fell on my face. Ezekiel understood his place when he was in heaven.

He understood that his place was indeed right upon his face, bowed down low to the ground. He who is above us.

He who rules and reigns over all that he has created. He's deserving of our worship. He's deserving of our submission. He's in heaven and we are on earth.

And that's a good thing. We need a God who is not on earth. We need a God who is not like us. We need a God who is in heaven on his throne and there he is in his temple, Psalm 11 teaches us.

[15:27] You might remember David. The writer of Psalm 11 wanted to build a temple on earth for the Lord. A house for God's glory to dwell in here.

And it was through his son Solomon that that earthly temple was eventually built. And so after Solomon finished building this temple in 1 Kings chapter 8, there is this grand ceremony.

And in this grand ceremony, a part of that ceremony was a prayer of dedication that Solomon gave.

And in that prayer of dedication, Solomon made it clear that God was not expected to abandon his

heavenly temple, his heavenly dwelling place to come and to live in this earthly temple that they had just built.

It was understood that that is not what is happening here. That God is not going to now leave heaven entirely to come and dwell in a temple made by human hands.

Yes, in this earthly temple, God would draw near to his people in a very special way. But this temple would be more like a footstool for God as he sat on his throne yet still in heaven.

[16:38] That's how Isaiah 66 describes it for us. God himself says in Isaiah 66, 1, heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. What is the house that you would build for me?

And what is the place of my rest? So in Solomon's prayer of dedication in 1 Kings 8, over and over again, Solomon pleads with the Lord in his prayer to hear and to answer the requests of his people. To hear and to answer. He would ask God to do this over and over again and he would do it not just from his earthly temple but from his heavenly one also. Solomon would say, and listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place.

That's the earthly temple. And listen, in heaven your dwelling place and when you hear forgive. If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house then hear in heaven.

Or again, Solomon would say, if your people go out to battle against their enemy by whatever way you shall send them and they pray to the Lord toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea.

[18:01] Eight times total Solomon asks God not just to hear from the earthly temple but to hear from heaven. Why does he do that?

Why does he keep saying hear us on earth but also hear us in heaven? Because God is so great and majestic and awesome that he cannot be contained in a house that is built by human hands. What does Acts 17:24 say? The God who made the world and everything in it being Lord of heaven and earth does not live in temples made by man nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

If God needed anything from us if he needed us to build him a temple if he needed us to make a home for him to live in if he needed us to help him what help could he truly be to us?

Why would we have any confidence of running to him in our distress? Why would we think that our souls are safe with him if he needed us to keep him safe?

[19:20] How could we have any confidence that the name of the Lord is a strong tower the righteous man runs into it and is safe as Proverbs 18:10 says.

So we need a God who is nothing like us. We need a God who rules and reigns from his holy temple in heaven. And if this temple is holy as Psalm 11 says it is because the God in the temple is holy himself.

Psalm 104 describes God to us as one who is clothed with splendor and majesty covering himself with light as with a garment. And the angels who worship him what do they continually say but holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty who was and is and is to come.

This God high and exalted is a holy God untainted by sin unblemished by sin. We need a God who is in heaven and is holy who alone dwells in unapproachable light.

Only he can claim that. Only he dwells in perfect holiness. And so he is not like us and that is just the God that we need.

[20:43] So that's the first way that we see that God is not like us. He resides in heaven. Here's the second way. We see this in the second half of verse 4 and then into verse 5.

He knows all. He knows all. Read with me beginning in the second half of verse 4. His eyes see. His eyelids test the children of man.

The Lord tests the righteous but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. So from God's throne in heaven his holy heavenly temple he sees all.

Nothing escapes his gaze. In sports officials sometimes miss calls. Who among us can say they have not been upset in watching a game and have screamed at the TV perhaps even in person because the official missed the call.

Especially in basketball. Especially in football. Especially in baseball. They don't always get the calls right. And sometimes sometimes they miss the call simply because they didn't see the call.

[21:56] They didn't see the foul take place. They didn't see whatever it was. I'm sure there are statistics out there that I have not looked into. And I'm sure that these statistics will tell you how

often referees in various sports get the calls wrong.

I haven't looked at the data. But I am confident that tennis umpires miss calls less often than officials in other sports.

Because somebody somewhere had this grand idea. Let's put the umpire in a huge chair above the court so they can see better.

Why haven't we done that with basketball? Why haven't we just taken a huge chair and said you sit there and you can see everything from up high? That's how it is with an umpire in tennis. They can look down upon the court.

That's a great idea. They have a bird's eye view of what takes place. They can see everything. And yet God is not just seated in a chair above the court.

[23 : 00] He is seated on his throne in heaven above the earth. He sees everything. He misses nothing. And his gaze, it penetrates even beyond outward actions.

The gaze of our Lord penetrates hearts and minds. In Psalm 139, David lists all the ways that God's presence is always with him.

And he says, beginning in verse 2, you know when I sit down and when I rise. You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it all together. And then he finishes the psalm by crying out, search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Do you see how naturally David is going between what can be seen and known even by humans?

[24 : 05] You can see when somebody sits and when they stand, but you can't see or know a word before it's on their tongue. And yet God sees and knows all.

And he sees it all from his throne in heaven, the righteous and the wicked. He examines them both. nothing is hidden from him.

No wicked deed done in darkness can escape his sight. Hebrews 4.13 says, No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

So all of our thoughts, all of our actions, all of our attitudes, all of our motives of our heart, he sees it all. It's laid bare before him. No one else can claim to be able to do this.

And that's the second way that our God is not like us. And here's the third way. He renders perfect judgments. Verses 6 and 7, let's read together.

[25 : 11] Let him rain coals on the wicked, fire and sulfur, and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds, the upright shall behold his face.

So the Lord is perfect in all of his judgments because he sees all perfectly, because he knows all.

So the one who has numbered our days, the one who knows and has ordained the end from the beginning, the one who brings all things to pass, the one who Acts 4.28 says, does whatever his hand and his plan have predestined to take place.

That God makes no mistakes. He rightly evaluates, he rightly assesses every single person. He has no need for a lengthy court case with witness after witness being called.

He doesn't need to wait for DNA testing to come in to prove the innocence or guilt of a criminal. He sees and knows all. As David says, even before a word is on my lips.

[26 : 26] And the one who knows all renders perfect judgments every single time. He condemns the wicked and it's justified, it's right, it's fair and true.

And he shows the innocent to be blameless. He shows kindness and mercy to the upright. Psalm 11 says that the upright shall behold his face, his pleasure towards them and that too is the perfect rendering of his judgment.

He never condemns the innocent and he never lets the guilty go free. Now we may not see his justice today. Read lots of psalms and you will see the wicked prosper.

But there is. Throughout the scriptures, the people of God are waiting for that justice to pass. The wicked may prosper today, but their end will come, God's word says.

A day is coming in which the righteous judge will act and he will save his people to salvation and he will judge his enemies.

[27 : 36] So today, the righteous have every reason to flee to him. There is refuge that is found in him for the upright. If you are upright, you will never flee to God for safety and find him ready to pour

out his wrath upon you.

He is not fickle. He is not unpredictable. He is not changing his mind one moment towards the righteous and then showing himself differently to them. He is who he is and he always acts in accord with his character.

To the righteous, he always shows himself to be full of mercy. To the unrighteous, he always shows himself to be full of wrath. So the upright flee to him for safety and they will always find that safety in him.

But who is the upright? How confident are you as you flee to the Lord? Will you be met with his smiling face in his presence?

Romans 3 says this, none is righteous, no not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless.

[28 : 54] No one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.

Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery. and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

That is an all-inclusive statement. No one, not one, is righteous. No one, none of us measures up. None of us passes the test. No one is good and righteous. And so when we read Psalm 11 through the lens of Romans 3, we can't help but ask, who can find refuge in the Lord?

We are all wicked. We have all loved violence and hated what is good. There is no safety or security for sinners to be found in the Lord. And actually, the frightening reality is just the opposite.

[29 : 58] There is great danger for sinners in the Lord. The words of David's companion in Psalm 11 suddenly sound very appealing. They make sense.

flee like a bird to the mountains and flee from the Lord. Forget about those who are bending their bow with their arrows fitted to the string. You have a holy, righteous God who hates the wicked, who himself is described in Scripture as a consuming fire.

His wrath is like the eruption of a volcano, fire and sulfur, so says Psalm 11. You have him to reckon with. Flee like a bird, run and hide from him.

That's what the wicked do in Revelation chapter 6. That is exactly what they do in that passage.

Listen to verse 15. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone slave and free hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

But hiding from God is impossible. We've seen that. We've established that. Listen to Psalm 33. It just echoes the words of Psalm 11. The Lord looks down from heaven.

[31 : 14] He sees all the children of man. From where he sits enthroned, he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth. He who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.

So there is no escape from God. If you go to heaven, he is there. The highest of heavens, he is there. If you go to the depths of the earth, he is there. If you go out to the farthest parts of the sea, he is there.

Just read the book of Jonah. You cannot escape him. And so the wicked, in Revelation 6, they hide in the mountains, just like the advice of David's companion in Psalm 11.

They hide in the mountains, but then they take it one step further. they call out to the mountains and the rocks and they say, fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb.

For the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand? The upright will see God's face and it's implied they're going to rejoice. But the wicked want nothing to do with seeing God's face.

[32 : 21] get me away. The wicked in Revelation get it. If we get just how good and righteous and holy God is, if we begin to understand just how unlike us he truly is, in and of ourselves, in our sinful state, we will tremble with fear.

He loves righteous deeds, but we loved violence. He hates the wicked. He judges the wicked and that's what we were. The portion of our cup, what we deserved to drink, was his wrath, his perfect judgment rendered.

And we were guilty. Every single one of us, without exception, God sees, God tests, our thoughts, our motives, our desires, laid bare before his eyes. And the cup of his wrath is what we deserve to drink.

Who can find refuge in the Lord? But the Lord came to us. The one who in so many ways is unlike us, became like us, as a man, yet without sin.

Jesus Christ came and humbled himself as a servant and he drank the cup of God's wrath for his people. Every single bitter drop of it, he drank to the dregs on the cross.

[33 : 52] And as a man he died, estranged from God, forsaken by him. If you are not in Christ this morning, God's wrath is still your portion.

His wrath is the cup that you will one day be made to drink. David's companion in Psalm 11 feared that the foundations might be destroyed in the city.

But one day God will shake the very foundations of this earth. 2 Peter 3.10 says that the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Your life will be laid bare by the God who sees and knows all and you will be judged justly for your sin. You will have no defense in his presence.

God will render his perfect judgment and you will be found guilty. On that day there will be no refuge in God. But that day is not here yet.

[35 : 02] And God is patient. Don't spurn his patience. Consider how kind he is in his patience towards you. Consider that his kindness might actually lead you to repentance.

turn to Christ and live today. His righteousness can be yours. Humble yourself. Confess that you are a sinner in desperate need of a Savior.

Confess that Christ is that Savior that you need. Believe on him that he is your only hope to be saved from God's wrath.

You can find your refuge in God today. He turns away none who come to him in faith. And if you are in Christ this morning you are already safe in him.

He is your safe haven. We flee to him for refuge and we have good reason to do that. We've seen three reasons in Psalm 11 this morning.

[36 : 04] He resides in heaven. He knows all and he renders perfect judgments. Here's one more reason. One more reason that Hebrews chapter 6 teaches us.

One more way that it teaches us he's different from us. He cannot lie. Hebrews 6 18 says that it is impossible for God to lie.

He's faithful to his promises. He's faithful to his word. He's given us his word. He's revealed his promises to us. So Hebrews 6 18 goes on to say we who have fled for refuge only time you'll find refuge in the New Testament.

We who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.

A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf. In other words we run to God for refuge because Jesus already stands in his presence on our behalf in his heavenly temple.

[37 : 18] He's already there in the temple of Psalm 11 and there we are safe. We are confident that we are safe. Confident that we will be held safe in Christ like a sure and steady anchor.

So don't flee like a bird. Don't go darting about like a bird looking for safety and security somewhere else. The mountains are a poor place to find refuge.

So is your money. So are your possessions. So is your prestige. Poor places to go flitting about to find security. You are safe in Christ.

You are secure in Christ and in Christ alone. alone. We have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

You have an anchor. So don't dart about like a bird. Jesus Christ ensures our safety because his blood pleads for us.

[38 : 22] His blood pleads for his people. His righteousness is ours. Psalm 11 says, The Lord loves righteous deeds. The upright shall behold his face.

The Lord loves the perfect righteousness of his son. And his face is towards his son. His face is smiling on his son.

And his face is towards those who are in his son. Those redeemed by his son. His face smiles on us too because we are found in him.

So like a child in the midst of a great thunderstorm, there is no place that is more safe than in the presence of God. He delights in us as he delights in his son.

Our heavenly father, indeed the glory is all yours. You alone deserve it. You alone are God. You alone are the one that we find our refuge in.

[39 : 21] We pray this morning that you would comfort and encourage the hearts of your people. That even in the text from your word that you would be working by your spirit to convict sinners, to save them in your grace, that they too would find their refuge in you this day.

Father, we thank you that your son goes before us, that he has entered into your presence and stands there on our behalf, that we find our refuge in you because his blood pleads for us. Your face shines on him and your word tells us your face shines on us. We give you praise. It's in Christ's name that we pray. Amen. Number 6, 24 to 26.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.