



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## Summer Playlist

### How to Worship Amidst the Storms of Life

Tim Badal | July 05, 2020



It is great to be with you again as we continue our

“Village at Home Digital Worship Services.” I have the great privilege of serving here as lead pastor and it is my great honor to kick off our new sermon series, Summer Playlist. We’re going to be exploring the Psalms, also known as the Songs of the Bible. The book of Psalms is God’s hymn book where followers of His rejoice and magnify the name of Jesus. They do so in good times, in the mundane moments of life and even the difficult times of life. Today, I want to open our series by looking at Psalm 71, so grab your Bible and turn there as we learn from God’s Word.

When storms happen, how do we worship God? Storms are unforgettable things. There are storms in each of our lives that we never forget. In fact, there are two storms in my life growing up here in the Fox Valley area that I will never forget. The first storm I remember took place on August 28, 1990. I was a freshman at Hinckley-Big Rock High School and a storm was brewing northwest of Hinckley. We saw the warnings that had come across the news and our teacher said it seemed to be a big storm. As the winds picked up, I remember sitting in class and looking out to in the parking lot. Our whole class saw a car get knocked over on its side because of the 75+ miles per hour winds that were hitting us. We were ushered out into the hallway where we were in a duck-and-cover position for over two hours. As kids, we were getting worked up and squirrely, until we heard that same storm had traveled more than 50 miles and destroyed the city of Plainfield, including the high school there. That storm was one of the most fierce tornadoes the Midwest had ever faced.

Then the second storm I remember took place in July 1996. You long-time Fox Valley inhabitants probably remember that storm. It wasn’t fierce, but rather a rainstorm that dumped more than 17” in 24 hours over the course of two days. It just rained and rained and rained. As we woke up the next morning, we found the results of mass flooding. We couldn’t get around on the roads because they were washed out. In fact, in the Cherry Hill subdivision not far from our Aurora campus, houses were completely submerged from floor to rooftop. It took months, some even years, to recuperate the losses of that flood.

You see, storms are unforgettable, especially the bad ones. We remember where we were and the carnage that took place as a result of the storms. But let’s be honest, storms are not just meteorological events; they are real events that take place in our lives. Storms happen in all types of ways. Some are private and nobody knows you’re going through them. Others are public, so everybody knows and joins in the sorrow. Storms happen as a result of broken relationships like marriages and rebellious or lost children.

Some of the carnage that my family and I faced is the result of a 1990 car accident that took the life of my brother. Then another storm that came out of nowhere was that of my wife’s cancer diagnosis. You see, storms have a way of stopping us in our tracks. They have a way of interrupting the dreams and plans we had for the future.

What I want to today is explore a Psalm of lament. That is a Psalm where someone is crying out and imploring the Lord to rescue them in their hour of need. Psalm 71 is an anonymous Psalm, but as scholars read Psalm 70, which is a Psalm

of David, they see Psalm 70 leading into Psalm 71. Most believe Psalm 71 was written by an aged King David who was looking back on his life, as well as the current storms of his life. The older he got, the more cognizant he became that in this world, he would have trouble. In his sorrow, he was crying out to the God of the universe to rescue him and be his refuge in the storm.

What I love about Psalm 71 is not that it just tells us we're going to have difficulties in this world, but his response to storms. Notice what he says at the beginning:

- <sup>1</sup> In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;  
let me never be put to shame!
- <sup>2</sup> In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;  
incline your ear to me, and save me!
- <sup>3</sup> Be to me a rock of refuge,  
to which I may continually come;  
you have given the command to save me,  
for you are my rock and my fortress.

David is saying, "I need help! I'm hurting and scared. I'm full of fear and dread." And for many of us right now, 2020 has been a year of storms with the pandemic and distress over the economy. There are a lot of issues and concerns before us. What I love about Psalm 71 is not that we can say, "Listen, we're in the same boat David was. We're in a bunch of trouble and are crying out to God for help." I love the last part of this Psalm where something amazing takes place. Let's pick up with verse 22:

- <sup>22</sup> I will also praise you with the harp  
for your faithfulness, O my God;  
I will sing praises to you with the lyre,  
O Holy One of Israel.
- <sup>23</sup> My lips will shout for joy,  
when I sing praises to you;  
my soul also, which you have redeemed.
- <sup>24</sup> And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long...

My aim today is that you and I would be able to do what David did. In the midst of storms, no matter how difficult and dreadful they may be, I trust that like David, you and I would be able to worship God as the storms of life rage. So whatever difficulty you're facing today, I want you to be able to worship God and Psalm 71 is the key to helping us, even when difficult times come.

## **1. We are able to worship God when we acknowledge the reality of the storm.**

So how do we get there? First of all, we need to recognize that just because we're followers of Jesus doesn't mean we are exempt from storms. In John 16:33, Jesus says very clearly that in this world you will have trouble. When speaking to the church, Peter said, "Do not be surprised when trials of many trials come your way" (1 Peter 4:12). So no matter what that television prosperity preacher tells you, no amount of faith or goodness is going to exempt you from the difficult times that come. Christian, we are not exempt from trials and tribulations; Jesus tells us we're going to have them so we should not be surprised when they come.

### Storms can come as a result of ungodly foes (4)

What brings about the storms of life? David shares four reasons why storms happen in our lives. Notice the first one in verse four is ungodly foes, enemies. *"Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust*

*and cruel man.*" If you've ever explored the life of David, you know that while he was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22) and did great things for God and his nation. He was a man who, for the majority of his life, always had an enemy or two around. As he grew older, these enemies were growing in number. In fact, the word "cruel" there in the text comes from the Hebrew word that literally means leaven—that which grows.

As you get older, you will recognize that your enemies are not small in number but will grow. You're going to agitate and anger people along the way. You're going to have differences along the way. The reason David had so many foes was because he was a follower of God; he was being blessed by God and his enemies hated that. They were jealous of that. It was because David lived differently than the world.

The Bible tells us that as Christians, we have three enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil, (1 John 2:15-17; Romans 13:14). All of them, because of our love for God, are fighting against us and seeking to destroy us and our testimony with God. If you've been a follower of Jesus Christ for any amount of time, you recognize and know the enemies that come as a result of following your Lord and Savior.

So employee, when you go to work tomorrow and people mock you for your faith or scorn you because you won't do those under-the-table things to get the deal done, you'll recognize they are enemies of the cross. Young person, when you're at school or an event, and those so-called friends mock you and accuse you of all manner of things because you won't go their way, you will understand when David says there are foes all about him because of his love and allegiance to his heavenly Father.

### Storms can come as a result of an uncertain future (9)

Notice the second reason storms come might be the result of an unknown future. Notice verse nine: "*Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent.*" There are some storms in life that are subtle and not as clear as having an enemy. The foe David was dealing with here was old age. As he got older, the more anxious he became because his future did not seem as clear as before. Let's face it, some of us are experiencing storms right now, not based on current reality but something unknown in the future.

Let me bring it down to everyday life. Some of us are in the midst of a storm because we're looking at the dark clouds on the horizon and asking, "What's going to happen with the kids for school? What's going to happen with my job amidst Covid-19? What's going to happen with the world economy? What's going to happen when the election takes place? What is going to take place if this happens or that happens?" Anxiety fills out hearts. Many in our church are dealing with the storm of anxiety or the storm of worry.

Jesus reminds us that we should not worry about tomorrow because no man or woman knows what a day might bring (Matthew 6:25-34). So David is looking out and worried about this unknown future. Some of us find ourselves in that same storm.

### Storms can come as a result of unfaithful friends (10–13)

The third reason we see hits close to home. It is unfaithful friends, or maybe for some of you it might be an unfaithful family member.

Let's pick up at Psalm 71:10:

- <sup>10</sup> For my enemies speak concerning me;  
those who watch for my life consult together  
<sup>11</sup> and say, "God has forsaken him;  
pursue and seize him,  
for there is none to deliver him."

- <sup>12</sup> O God, be not far from me;  
O my God, make haste to help me!
- <sup>13</sup> May my accusers be put to shame and consumed;  
with scorn and disgrace may they be covered  
who seek my hurt.

As we look at the life of David, we know some of his greatest trials hit closest to home. In his old age, David ran from fear. He had not one but two sons who vied for his kingdom, angry and covetous of the kingdom he was about to give to Solomon. David's two other sons ran after him, pursuing him so the kingdom might be theirs. David knew the betrayal that came from family and friends.

Some of us are experiencing storms right now from a betraying spouse. We're feeling storms because of something that has transpired with our children. Maybe it's a broken relationship in our family; maybe it's someone close to us who has let us down. Sometimes the worst of storms are those that happen closest to home and David recognized that.

The Bible is full of people who experienced storms by those closest to them.

- Abel experienced a storm that was brought on by his brother.
- Joseph experienced storms because of jealousy his brothers had.
- Even Jesus experienced betrayal, not from someone far from Him, but Judas, one of His 12 disciples who had walked and talked with Jesus for three years.

Storms can hit close to home.

### Storms can come as a result of our unparalleled Father (19–20)

There's one final storm that comes as a result of something you would not even think about, but I'm so glad David shares it. Storms can come as a result of our heavenly Father. This one is hard to swallow.

Notice what verses 19 and 20 say:

- <sup>19</sup> Your righteousness, O God,  
reaches the high heavens.  
You who have done great things,  
O God, who is like you?
- <sup>20</sup> You who have made me see many troubles and calamities  
will revive me again;  
from the depths of the earth  
you will bring me up again.

Who is he talking about? God has made David experience troubles, not just once but several and bitterly. The God Who says He loves us brings on storms? The God Who says He cares about us allows the most difficult of storms to come our way? The answer is yes. While we don't fully understand why He does it, but as parents, we do recognize that we allow our children to experience hardships and storms so they will become better and stronger. You see, God allows storms in our lives because He wants us to become more like Him. Now that's hard to swallow at times, recognizing those storms are painful and bring difficulties and despair.

Brother and sister, before we move on from this, let's remember that the God Who allows the storms is the God Who has His hands on the control of the storm. You see, God will not allow the storm to rage any more than He wants it to. He won't let it last any longer than He thinks it needs to be. There's not a trial or storm that has happened in your past or now in your present or in your future that has not been approved by God. The trial that you're facing right now was approved by God and the great truth we can understand is that God will not let it last longer than what will bring good into your life. Even what man intended as harm, God intends for good (Genesis 50:20).

So we see these storms and the reality of why storms happen in our lives, but that doesn't help us understand why we can worship God amidst the storms. What David shows us in Psalm 71 is not just the reality of the storm, because that

would only discourage us. Listen, what David was saying in point one is that life is going to stink at times, but he doesn't end there. David moves on to show us some of the results of the storms.

## 2. We are able to worship when we understand the positive results of the storm.

Sometime ago, I was watching a documentary on the weather channel about hurricanes being named after men and women. The program said, "Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Hurricane..." It was produced after hurricane Charlie had ravaged the East Coast. Let's face it, all hurricanes have a way of destroying property and lives. In the first part of the program, they talked about the devastation and hardships that hurricanes bring. In light of all the destruction and disaster they bring, the programmers pivoted and began to talk about the benefits of hurricanes to our ecosystem. I could talk about all of them, but there were four major ones they talked about. They have a way of refreshing or resetting the plant and animal life we need every day. We need hurricanes in our lives, no matter how disastrous they can be at times; we need them overall so we can live and prosper in the areas where they hit.

I began to think, "Might that be true of our lives as Christians? Could it be that God allows trials, tribulations and storms in life because they might bring about good? They might benefit us? Well, David sees that and it allows him to worship God.

Notice three results things that storms bring about that are good.

### Storms remind us of our vulnerability (7)

They bring us to a point of vulnerability. Notice verse seven: "*I have been as a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.*" That word portent literally means a wonder or marvel. David is saying, "I have become a marvel. I have become a celebrity. I have become a sensation to many." And he had. He was the king of Israel, the most powerful king of all in Israel's history. We might call him a phenom.

That's how we feel when good things happen. When work is good. When the family is good. When our marriage is strong. When all our ducks are in a row and our 401k is growing leaps and bounds. We begin to step back and say, "Look at the good I'm doing. Others must sit back and wonder and marvel at me. Look at me. I'm amazing!" David says while that is true, he adds a caveat which is three letters—but. "I am a wonder to many, but I need my God."

You see, it's easy when things are going well for us to think we are the reason behind it., but when storms and trials come into our lives, then we begin to recognize that we need God. It's a reminder that we're way more vulnerable, frail and fragile than we ever thought. We stop reading our own press and begin to recognize that in the good times or the bad, we need God in our lives because we are vulnerable individuals. David recognized that because of the storm, he needed God.

That vulnerability leads to the second result.

### Storms show our need for dependency (12a)

Notice what David says in verse 12: "*O God, be not far from me...*" He wants God close to him. If you were to talk to any mature follower of Jesus Christ, they probably would tell you the closest they have ever been to their God is in times of trials.

When my children were small, they would run to me during storms. Who can blame them during lightning, thunder and harsh winds? That would scare any small child. They would run to someone they knew was stronger, more powerful and more secure in times of trouble. Trials do that with us as adults, too. We're secure and independent when things are going well, but when the storms of life come, we run to our heavenly Father and grab on to Him because we need Him in our time of need.

Now, vulnerability and dependency lead to an urgency.

## Storms proclaim our urgency (12b)

We can't live without God. Notice what David says in the rest of verse 12:

O God, be not far from me;  
O my God, make haste to help me!

Can you hear David yelling and screaming? Notice the urgency he's facing. We know this feeling when our world comes crashing down.

I remember seeing the urgency of my parents when they learned of the death of their first-born son. "We need you God. Come quickly. Come to our aid. We don't know where to go. We don't have answers for these trials and storms in our life. We need You!" It's what the hymn writer meant when he wrote, "I need You each and every hour. I need You."

You see, when we begin to see that the disasters and troubles we face in life are not there to destroy us but to grow us, then we move away from feeling sorry for ourselves in the moment and start moving toward praising God. When we start seeing the good results that come from our storms, as David did, we're able to take our focus off the light and momentary trials to see what God is doing. That's why the book of James tells us to consider it all joy when we experience trials of many kinds (James 1:2). Why? Because just like David said, trials produce in us character, perseverance, maturity and hope. You see, when we know God is using hard things to grow us and make us more like His Son, then we can focus, not on the circumstances but on the good things God wants to accomplish. And this leads us to our response.

Once we know the reality of the storm and the results it can bring, now we have a choice. In the moment, just as Job's wife told him, in trials and tribulations, will you curse God and die (Job 2:8)? Or will you say, "Though God gives and takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 2:21)? My prayer for my own life and your lives is that we would do the later, not the former. Whether the storms rage on in our lives—whether God gives or takes away—or we are living our best lives right now, we should praise and worship God.

Let's be honest. How do we do that when life seems so dim and dark? How do we do that when Covid-19 rages on? When economic calamity seems to be all around us? When the dysfunction of government and division that we face in our day is all about us? How do we worship God? How do we turn our focus from all the bad news to the good news of God and His plans for us? We need to respond properly. Psalm 71 tells us how to do just that.

### **3. We are able to worship when we have a proper response to the storm.**

This response involves remembering the character of God (1-3)

The first thing we need to respond with is remembering His character. I don't have enough time to work through all of this, but I want you to notice three things about God's character that David speaks about. First, he says when storms rage on, remember God's glory in Psalm 71:8:

My mouth is filled with your praise,  
and with your glory all the day.

Notice he talks about God's power in 71:18:

So even to old age and gray hairs,  
O God, do not forsake me,  
until I proclaim your might to another generation,  
your power to all those to come.

David says, "Instead of thinking about my problems, I'm going to think about Your glory, power and faithfulness" (71:22):

I will also praise you with the harp  
for your faithfulness, O my God;  
I will sing praises to you with the lyre,  
O Holy One of Israel.

Five times in Psalm 71, we see God acknowledge the righteousness that He shows and lives by. This means we can trust God because His character is impeccable, even when at times we don't know why He does the things He does or why He allows the things He allow. We need to remember the character of God when storms come.

### This response involves reviewing the care of God (4-6)

Notice in 71:4-6, he says:

<sup>4</sup> Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,  
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.  
<sup>5</sup> For you, O Lord, are my hope,  
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.  
<sup>6</sup> Upon you I have leaned from before my birth;  
you are he who took me from my mother's womb...

Later on in verse 17, David tells us, "*O God, from my youth you have taught me...*" When the troubles that David faced came his way, what did David do? If it were today, he would go to his living room and pull the DVD off the bookshelf titled, "David, The Early Years." He would sit back and watch how God had cared for him over and over again. Some of the episodes would show David as a shepherd boy when a bear and a lion came to attack the flock under his care. He would see how God empowered him with the strength and courage to kill both the bear and lion, protecting his sheep. Then he would remember as a teenage boy, when all of Israel was in fear of a giant named Goliath, how God enabled him to kill that enemy of Israel. Then he would remember how God had protected and cared for him when Saul began to hate him because of all that God was doing in David's life. Then there would be story after story about foreign kingdoms and armies that seemingly had the upper hand. David would be reminded of how God had taken care of him.

Can I be honest with you? As I grow older, the trials have gotten harder and more immense. They hurt and cause even the best of us to be filled with fear. But brother and sister in Christ, if you've walked with the Lord long enough, put that DVD in and see how God has taken care of you one step at a time. Yes, we are facing an unknown future with a pandemic and all manor of difficulties in our lives. But we can look back and see as individuals, as a church, as a nation and as a world how God has never left us or forsaken us. The God Who was with us in the past is with us in the present and will be with us in the Future. This type of worship, as we praise God for His character and care for us, will cause the proper response.

### This response involves renewing our commitment before God (18)

We can know we're headed in the right direction when we renew our commitment to God amidst the storms. That's when you know maturity is taking root in your life. From a human perspective you want to curse God and be angry with Him, but your heart can be filled with praise and you saying, "God, in the midst of the storm, I will serve You. I am committed to You whether the good, bad or ugly takes place in my life. I am going to do all I can to honor You all the days of my life."

Notice verse 18:

So even to old age and gray hairs,  
O God, do not forsake me,  
until I proclaim your might to another generation,  
your power to all those to come.

Three times in our text, David speaks of his continual commitment or praise amidst the storm. Brothers and sisters, let me close with this. We are experiencing storms as a nation, a world and as individuals. Some of you are experiencing private and personal storms that maybe no one around you knows about, but God does. He says, "What man intended for harm, I will use for your good (Genesis 50:20). So allow your dependency to grow; allow your vulnerability to become more and more a reality in your life. Allow that dependency and urgency to cause you to run to Jesus, your refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1). When that trouble comes, remember the character of God. Reflect on the care of God in your past. As you do, renew your commitment that whether in times of triumph or agonies of defeat, you will say with a whole-hearted response, "Lord, I am here to serve You and declare Your praises to the generations that are to come."

I know trials and storms of life are hard; I know they can cause us to grow bitter. But God allows these storms to make us better. It is my prayer is that you will see that and declare God's goodness amidst the storms.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | [www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove](http://www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove)

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