

Lead Me to the Rock Psalm 61

Lead Me to the Rock Introduction

What do we do when God feels distant?

- Option #1: Just be OK with it. Our walk with him is not what it used to be or not what we hoped it would be. So what?
- Option #2: Give up on God. A relationship with him doesn't seem helpful, so why is it worth it?
- Option #3: Pray. This is the option that David chose.

- Prayer took David to a place beyond himself.
- He began to see himself in the big-picture context of God's overarching plan.
- He also began to see his relationship to the Lord as one of commitment – more than his current state.

- Lead Me to the Rock Psalm 61:1
- David starts with the most basic of requests.
- He does this in other psalms too.

*Psalm 5: 1-2 (ESV) Give ear to my words, O LORD;
Consider my groaning.
Give attention to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you do I pray.*

*Psalm 55:1-2 (ESV) Give ear to my prayer, O God,
and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy!
Attend to me, and answer me ...*

Lead Me to the Rock Psalm 61:2-3

- Some believe this psalm was written when David was fleeing from Absalom.
- Other suggest it was when he was fleeing from Saul.
- It really doesn't matter.
 - *The great thing about prayer is that it is not limited to a particular place. God is everywhere. He is as close as our crying. And the moment we cry out, lost and broken though we are, He responds and saves us. From the ends of the earth.*
 - *Chuck Smith (1927 – 2013)*
 - *The word "rock" (šur) used here normally describes a rocky outcropping that could provide natural defenses to those on the run from their enemies. The psalmist desires to be whisked away by God to a protective crag that is beyond his own reach.*
 - *Gerald H. Wilson (1945 – 2005)*

- We often find ourselves feeling distant from God.
- It can even feel like physical distance – as if God is nowhere to be found.
- It was at a time like this that David cried out and the Lord heard him.
- David was never so far away that God could not reach him.
 - *Jesus will be all this to thee, dear heart. Thou hast got to the end of the earth and of thyself; call out to Christ, and He will bring thee, faint and ready to die, to Himself as the Shadow from the heat. The Man of men can be this for thee, because He is higher than thou art.*
Higher than I, because of his Divine origin; higher, because of his perfect obedience; higher, because of his supreme sufferings; higher, because of his ascension to the right hand of power. Yet his side is scarred and cleft.
 - *F. B. Meyer (1847 – 1929)*
- Jesus leads us to a place that is beyond our reach.
- When he leads us there he draws us to himself.
- He is the Rock that is higher than us and far more solid and stable than we can ever be.

Lead Me to the Rock Psalm 61:4-5

*Psalm 27:4-5 (ESV) One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:
 that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
 all the days of my life,
 to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
 and to inquire in his temple.
 For he will hide me in his shelter
 in the day of trouble;
 he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
 he will lift me high upon a rock.*

Lead Me to the Rock Psalm 61:6-7

- David makes this request based upon God's steadfast love or *chesed* – God's loyal covenant love.
- It is the love of commitment which God promised to Israel forever – the basis of his covenant with them.
 - *This request does seem strange, for even allowing for hyperbole, how can David possibly ask that he as an individual reign for ever? But the problem resolves itself when we remember the importance of his dynasty.*
 - *The Davidic line did eventually end in Israel, but David's prayer was granted in that ultimately, the Messiah was born in his line (Matt 1:1). Thus there is a sense in which David's kingdom does continue forever.*
 - *Samuel Ngewa, Africa International University, Nairobi*

- The Lordship of Christ is the foundation upon which he builds his church.
- Obedience to Christ is the foundation upon which we need to build our individual lives.
- David looked beyond his current need to God's character and God's promises.
- This helped make David's relationship with God so strong.
- We are deeply strengthened when we see our lives in the bigger context of God's plan for the world.
- We are more than needy individuals.
- We are members of his church and contributors to his plan for the nations.

Lead Me to the Rock Psalm 61:8

- Vows. See also v.5.
- David saw his relationship with the Lord in the context of commitment – something like a marriage.
- This is far more than:
 - Feelings
 - Pure Intellect
 - Present Knowledge
- God made a commitment to Israel.
- God made a commitment to David.
- David made commitments back to God.
- When faith wavers and understanding falls short, commitment can get us through the darkest times of trial.
- When faith wavers and understanding falls short, commitment can get us through the darkest times of trial.
- Commitment reminds us of the kind of God we serve – that he is the source of our strength.

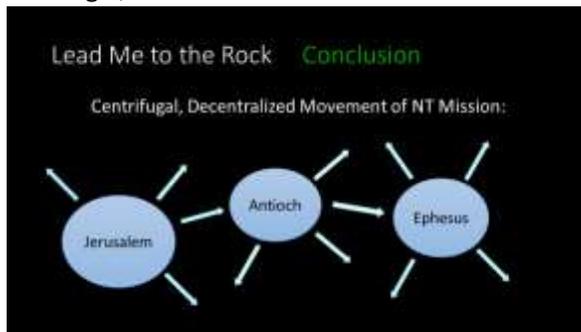
Lead Me to the Rock Conclusion

- At the beginning of the psalm, David felt far way from God.
- He is crying out from the "end of the earth."
- Old Testament thought put God's residence in Jerusalem more than anywhere else on earth.
- If David was in exile, that alone would make him feel distant from God.
- In fact, Old Testament Mission was thought of in terms of the nations coming to Jerusalem to worship.
- That has changed, but again, we are deeply strengthened when we see our lives in the bigger context of God's plan for the world, the church and the nations.

- Centripetal Movement of Mission in the Old Testament:



- Centrifugal, Decentralized Movement of NT Mission:



(Credit to Craig Ott for visual concepts)

- Centrifugal, Decentralized Movement of Mission now:



- Christ is present within us individually as Christians.
- He is present with us corporately as the church.
- Therefore, we need not go to any particular holy place to find Jesus.
- Here is here, wherever “here” happens to be.

To Christ – In Christ – For Christ

- Leading others to Christ, as we see in John 1:40-42

“One ... who ... followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.”

- Abiding in Christ so that our lives bear much fruit, as Christ explains in John 15:5

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

- Being sent for Christ as the Holy Spirit empowers us, according to Acts 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- Jesus needs to be that rock, that firm foundation, upon which we build our lives.
- He is our protection as we face the adversities of life.
- He is the source of our inner strength when our hearts are faint as David’s was.

1 Peter 2:4-6 (ESV) As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture [Isaiah 28:16]:

*“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”*

Matthew 7:24–27 (ESV) Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

- What do we do when God feels distant?
 - Option #1: Just be OK with it. So what?
 - Option #2: Give up on God. Is it worth it?
 - Option #3: Pray. This is the option that David chose. This is the one option that goes beyond us.
- Prayer took David to a place beyond himself.
- He began to see God’s overarching plan.
- He began to see his relationship to the Lord as one of commitment – something beyond his current state.
- We can do this too.