

# **God's Gratitude Playlist: Psalm 34**

November 7, 2021

**Overarching Theme:** In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

## **Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

## **Core Point:**

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1<sup>st</sup> Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

## **Reflect on this Scripture: Psalm 34 NRSV**

- I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*
- <sup>2</sup> *My soul makes its boast in the LORD;  
let the humble hear and be glad.*
- <sup>3</sup> *O magnify the LORD with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.*
- <sup>4</sup> *I sought the LORD, and he answered me,  
and delivered me from all my fears.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Look to him, and be radiant;  
so your faces shall never be ashamed.*
- <sup>6</sup> *This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,  
and was saved from every trouble.*
- <sup>7</sup> *The angel of the LORD encamps  
around those who fear him, and delivers them.*
- <sup>8</sup> *O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
happy are those who take refuge in him.*
- <sup>9</sup> *O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,  
for those who fear him have no want.*
- <sup>10</sup> *The young lions suffer want and hunger,  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Come, O children, listen to me;  
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Which of you desires life,  
and covets many days to enjoy good?*
- <sup>13</sup> *Keep your tongue from evil,*

*and your lips from speaking deceit.*

<sup>14</sup> *Depart from evil, and do good;  
seek peace, and pursue it.*

<sup>15</sup> *The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their cry.*

<sup>16</sup> *The face of the LORD is against evildoers,  
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

<sup>17</sup> *When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears,  
and rescues them from all their troubles.*

<sup>18</sup> *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,  
and saves the crushed in spirit.*

<sup>19</sup> *Many are the afflictions of the righteous,  
but the LORD rescues them from them all.*

<sup>20</sup> *He keeps all their bones;  
not one of them will be broken.*

<sup>21</sup> *Evil brings death to the wicked,  
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.*

<sup>22</sup> *The LORD redeems the life of his servants;  
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned*

### **This Week: Psalm 34**

The Book of Psalms is the Song book (and prayer book) of Israel and the early church. While there are many different kinds of psalms, the two dozen or so 'Songs of Thanksgiving' create a "gratitude playlist" for God's people. Today we consider Psalm 34.

Psalm 34 was written in a creative, acrostic style with each line beginning with a different letter from the Hebrew alphabet. You might call it a "thanksgiving 'from A-Z' kind of Psalm (or, more accurately, thanksgiving from "Alef – Tav"). It is an artistic way of expressing gratitude to the Lord in all of life, especially the more challenging times. Traditionally, it was written in the midst of David's on-going attempts to elude the clutches of envious, murderous King Saul. David is so desperate for safety that he even ventures into enemy territory (the Philistines) to hide from Saul. If this tradition is correct, Psalm 34 was written as David discovers that the Lord can be feared (revered, trusted) and praised at all times.

In striking contrast to what our culture may teach us, Psalm 34 teaches us that life begins with fearing God – life is a gift from God for which God makes gracious provision (vv. 8-9). What culture teaches us fosters greed, whereas what Psalm 34 teaches us fosters gratitude (vv. 1-3). If life is defined the way our culture defines it, there is no allowance for suffering or for comprehension of the dilemma of the human condition – short, no possibility for happiness or joy except in the most shallow of senses.

The psalmist experiences life amid suffering, not beyond it. Their faith is thus the kind that Jesus embodied and to which Jesus calls his disciples – faith that

knows the paradoxical good news that to lose one's life for God's sake is truly to find it (see Mark 8:35). Thus it is easy to imagine the psalmist, like the apostle Paul enumerating his "many afflictions" (Rom 8:31) and then concluding that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God".

Psalm 34 is traditionally associated with the Lord's Supper, primarily because of the word "taste" in v. 8. In a sense, this connection is superficial; however, as a whole, Psalm 34 is appropriately associated with the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper celebrates God's gracious provision for life, which is the good news proclaimed by Psalm 34. The proper response is gratitude (vv. 1-3) – eucharist!  
-- Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol IV, p. 815-16

### **Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. How do you normally respond to adversity? Where is God in the midst of our experiences of adversity?
2. What kind of faith would lead a person like David, facing less than ideal circumstances, to declare "*I will bless the Lord at all times...*"
3. When you think back on a difficult season of your life (when you thought things were 'going to pieces'), can you now see any signs of grace or divine sustenance?
4. How do you think writing this Psalm shaped David's perspective? Based on David's example, consider writing your own brief Psalm this week.

### **Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC and/or to journal in the "*Morning by Morning*" gratitude resource.
2. Write your own brief Psalm or prayer of gratitude this week.
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Psalm 34:8  
*O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
happy are those who take refuge in him.*