

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

August 20, 2017

SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Psalms

PART

3

TITLE

Silenced By Apathy

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 111



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For sure. It's great to see Providence, always a joy to sing with you, to worship the Lord and see you, see your faith. It's such a great encouragement to me. If you're a guest here with us today, welcome. If you're in this room or there's lot of venues, but we're really glad that you've joined us as well. We really count it a great honor when guests come to Providence to worship Jesus with us, or if you don't know Christ, actually learn more of who he is and what he's done. If you are a guest, we are thrilled that you have joined us.

This is a big day for us and I want to ask you to ... We're in Psalms, so if you want to head there. Psalm 111. This is an amazing psalm of a man who shows us how to work through something that we all face, and that's apathy. To move into a place to where he shows up with a lot of other people to worship the Lord, and he shows him the full heart instead of just a half a heart. It is great to see. I want to ask, if you would, let's just bow and let's pray. Let's ask for help.

Father in heaven, we are grateful for this psalm. We're grateful for the man who wrote it, or likely David. Thank you for just working in our lives this week. God, I pray that you would use this text just to blow away the fog of apathy and indifference from our life. We confess to you that when we wake up, sometimes we have no idea even why we feel the way that we do, but sometimes we wake up feeling dull and numb. We pray, God, that you would work in our lives, even today, on a day like Celebration Sunday, would you help us, God, to see your plan for our life. We thank you for your word. We thank you, God, that it shows us who you are, who we are, and how we're to live in your world. We yield to you now. We ask that you would speak through weakness and glorify Jesus Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Each year, we choose one Sunday, and on that Sunday, what we do is intentionally look back over the last year of ministry to find individual blessings; things that have happened here at Providence that really have God's fingerprints all over them. What we seek to do is to celebrate Him for those things. This happens to be that day. So if this is the first time at Providence, you really came on a great day. You get donuts and everything. That doesn't happen every Sunday, all right?

But what's so important that you understand is this. The fact that there's balloons and donuts and there's a little thing in your hand and a little logo and stickers ... This doesn't register as celebration to the heart of God. You have to know that. At the end of this day, what he's looking for is people's hearts, and have we celebrated Him individually and as a church family? When he looks down and he sees us acknowledging him, thanking him, loving him, seeing that he's the one that gave every good thing, then all of a sudden he considers that celebration.

I think the second thing that's really important that we look at and make sure we know is this; that we are not celebrating ourselves. You may look at this thing and all of a sudden, think, "Man, we think highly of ourself around here." What you have to understand about this whole day and what this book is even about, which we'll look at more later, is that what we're looking for, we're looking intentionally, trying to peel our eyes back to see blessings and then attribute God glory for what we see. He's the ultimate giver, and he has given us so much. So this day really is about him.

What we find here in this text, though, is the answer to a really important question, and that is this: What do we do on a day like Celebration Sunday when we don't feel like celebrating? Let's just take that out of it and just say it's a Sunday. What happens next Sunday when it's time to worship and you don't feel like worshipping, or when it's time to share the gospel and you don't feel like sharing the gospel? When it's time to give and you don't feel like giving? What do we do when moments in time arise where an act is needed or not and our heart is cold or numb? We feel apathetic towards the things that we say that we believe, and we just don't necessary feel it at that moment. What do we do?

This is what the psalmist says. He says, "Praise the Lord. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered. The Lord is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear him. He remembers his covenant forever. He has shown his people the power of his works in giving them the inheritance of the nations. The works of his hands are faithful and just. All his precepts are trustworthy. They are established forever and ever to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. He sent redemption to his people. He commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever."

What he says in verse one is ultimately where we want to be able to get to. That is that he shows up in the company of upright people in the congregation, and he shows up not with a divided heart or half a heart, but he says that he shows up with his whole heart. He says, "with all of my heart, my whole heart, do I give you thanks in the company of the upright, in the congregation." But the fact is you and I both know that doesn't happen in our life all the time. In fact, some of us wore up today feeling like putting on this name tag just to keep people away, right? I'm uninterested and I'm apathetic, so just leave me alone. You've muscled your way to drive to church, eat a few donuts, and sing a few songs or at least stand up for those songs and watch a few videos, and you have a smile on your face, but the reality is that, truth be told, is you feel cold right now. You feel numb. You don't feel like any of this is really worth celebrating; it's just something that they're going to do. Next week, it'll be back to normal.

That happens to every single one of us. We show up sometimes and our whole heart is not in the congregation. The fact is, apathy never respects the moment. It never says, “Oh, man, I’m so sorry. I came at the wrong day. This is important to you.” Apathy never says to us, “You know what? I’m so sorry. I forgot this was Sunday morning. You like to gather with all your little friends and sing to the Lord. I am so sorry. I’ll come back tomorrow.” Apathy never says that. Apathy never looks at us and says, “You know, I am so sorry I came at the wrong time. I know that this is a great opportunity. This is an open door for you to share your faith, your story, leads to his story with somebody else. You go ahead and take that. We’ll talk tomorrow.”

Apathy never does that. Apathy barges in unannounced at our life at the least opportune moments. What apathy does is it threatens to silence our mouths. It threatens to silence our worship, our thanksgiving, our affection, our encouragement of others. So what do we do? What does the text tell us to do when we feel that way? This is really important for us, Providence. You have to understand this. We do this week by week by week by week, and your heart affects the collective average of our worship culture. That’s what a culture is. It’s the collective average of its people in that area. This week, you may come with a whole heart, and someone else came with a half heart, and next week they may be really exciting about what we’re singing, and you may just want to sit there and think, “Can’t we just be done already?”

This happens. This is real life. So what do we do when our heart is not ready to do the thing that the moment calls for? This is what he tells us to do. God invites us to do three things. First is this, is that God invites us to study what he has done. He invites us to study what he has done. You see verse two? Look at verse two. He says, “Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.” Who is it that does the studying? It’s the delighted people who do the studying. It’s always the delighted people who do the studying. A delighted husband finds it no chore to study his wife’s interests, her faith, what she loves. A delighted mother finds it no chore to study the body and the coo of her little infant baby. And a delighted Christian finds it no chore to investigate and study the works of God.

When you and I, we make something with our hands, we paint a wall, we build a cabinet ... Even when we do our very, very best, someone comes over and goes, “Wow, that’s beautiful.” Very rarely do we say, “Look at little closer. It gets better the closer you look.” Well, we normally, “Don’t look too close. It’s not perfect. It’s nice, but ...” And God never does that. God always says, “Lean in a little bit more. There’s more to be found. Keep looking. Keep studying. I’ve done amazing things in the world.”

I want to show you just a few of these, okay? These are just random things. First of all, a moth. A moth is something you and I normally step on, right? But look at the complexity that God has placed within a moth. When you see that and you go, “Wow! That’s really amazing, God, that’s you made a moth to look like this!” God doesn’t go, “Yeah, I’m really glad you enjoy it.” No, what he says is this: “Why don’t you look just a little bit closer?” You put that under a microscope and this is the wing of a moth. Look at the order and complexity and design and intentionality in what God has created.

There's a lot of us in the summer who like the beach. I've not actually been to the beach. When you get to the beach, you find these sand dollars and you're really when you find a full one. In fact, there's some people at the beach right now. In fact, if you are, welcome. So glad you joined us today. Enjoy the beach today, alright? Anyway, so we find sand dollars, we're like, "Wow, that's amazing!" God doesn't go, "Yeah, okay. But hold it way far out, because it's more pretty father out." No, he says, "Why don' you look a little bit closer?" When you look a little bit closer at a sand dollar, look at the symmetry. Look at the beauty and design of a sand dollar.

Everything in life, God wants us to look a little bit closer. When we're delighted, we find no problem wanting to lean in and look a little bit closer. I'm sort of thinking about the fact that we get to hear. We have ears, and they work. At least, for most of us, they work. Have you ever thought, how do we actually hear? It's like, "Well, yeah, someone talks and I hear. That's how I hear." No, that's really not how you hear. If you lean a little bit closer, what you find is that God has created an absolute miracle in your ears. This is how it works. Check this out.

Sound travels through waves, through the air, from a particular source that's either moving or vibrating. When I hit this and you hear it, what's happening is there's a vibration that comes from movement that actually moves air towards your ears. I'm speaking right now and you can hear that because my vocal chords are vibrating as I'm pushing air through them, and that vibration actually causes air to move in sound waves to your ear. Now, what happens when it gets to your ear?

Look at this ear. First thing that happens, it goes into the ear canal. Goes through the ear canal and it hits your ear drum. An amazing thing happens when it hits the eardrum, and that's the eardrum, it likes to move a lot also. All of a sudden, what happens is it hits it and the eardrum begins to vibrate. Connected inside that is the middle ear and connected to that eardrum are three bones. Little, tiny bones. When that eardrum, it moves, the first bone, it starts to vibrate a little bit and it causes the second one to vibrate a little bit, it causes the third one to vibrate. Then all of a sudden, that third one is connected to the inner ear. Looks like a snail, doesn't it? What's amazing about the inner ear is this. This thing is filled with liquid that carries the vibrations to thousands of tiny hair cells, and the movement in this fluid causes those cells to carry a message to the nerve that's connected to the brain, which turns into a signal of what you hear.

God did all of this. And we look at him and go, "Yeah, I heard." Why don't you lean in just a little bit and be amazed at all that I have done? You think about the fact that I'm wearing a microphone right now. God created the world to even work like this. Think about this for a second. My vocal chords do what I just said. It goes into this little furry ball thing, right, little microphone. It goes down a cord and as it goes down, somewhere up in here, it transitions it into an electrical impulse. It goes down to a pre-amp, it reads back in those little ... I don't know what they're called. Those two little ... We'll call them receivers. That's probably what they are, right? It takes that impulse down into a sound board and that sound board, what it does, is it then boosts and cuts the individual frequencies of the sound wave. And then it sends it through cables back to these speakers, and these speakers, they transform those electrical impulses back into movements that move air to your ears.

What's amazing is that your ear can pick up five hundred people singing and all the different pitches and notes and tunes, all the instruments, all at the same time. Think about the complexity of what's happening inside the side of your head right now. The psalmist looks at this and he goes, "It's just full of splendor and wonder and majesty." You see, Providence, when we are delighted, study is no chore. The rest of psalm 111 is a acrostic poem. It's one line that starts with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, all the way through. All he's doing is he's picking out individual things that have happened that God has done in the lives of his people with an invitation to say, "You ought to study what he did here just a little bit more."

Have you ever taken the time to actually think about what he says here in verse five, that he provides food? Some time, sit down with your food and then sit down with a piece of paper and go, now, where did this come from? What all had to take place through time and space from God's hand in order for you to have that food? It's remarkable if you actually will study, if you'll be delighted enough to study. In verse six, it says that he's shown power in giving his people an inheritance. Number seven, it says that his word is trustworthy and in verse nine, he says, oh, lean into this one. He goes, "He sent redemption to his people." Think of all that he has done in order to bring forgiveness to you and to me.

Think about this for a second. We try to jog your imagination Sunday after Sunday after Sunday to be amazed at the fact that you have been forgiven by Jesus Christ because of what he has done, and that starts all the way back in creation. He created you, we sinned, and then he made a promise. He says, "You sinned. You broke fellowship. But I'm going to come and I'm going to rescue you." And then time and space working through literally hundreds of people and hundreds of generations in order to bring Jesus Christ at the right time and the right city, to the right parents, to do the right thing, and that was to die on a cross for our sin. He was buried and he rose from the dead, and he gives us an invitation. He says, "If you will believe, I'll make you my people of my covenant. I will forgive you forever. I will give you my righteousness forever."

My point, Providence, is this. When you feel apathetic, take God up on his invitation and come to the party by looking beneath the surface of his works. The booklet in your hand, okay? Most of us, I know what happens with these booklets. You either throw them away or something. Do me one little favor. Just read something in here and sit down with a piece of paper and try to stretch your imagination of all that God had to do in order just to do one thing. All the lives that had to be moved, all the promises that had to be kept from him, everything that he had to do in order to do ... This book is simply created to be a tool to help you consider categories worth studying.

If you don't want to study this, look at your life. Consider one blessing. One good thing in your life. Write it at the top of the piece of paper and say, "Now, what did God have to do in time and space in order to bring that to pass?" Just keep turning over another rock and be amazed and more amazed at what he has done. Psalm 29, verse two, says, "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name." When you see those good things, say, "God, you did this. You did this. You did this."

That's not the only party that we're invited to. The second is that God invites us to hope in what he will do. In other words, we're not bound just to look back to see God's works. All of God's kindness is seen in the rear-view mirror of our life. We will see reflections of what will come because he's already done them once. We can count on other things will take place that are similar to them. This is why the psalmist uses the word "forever". I know we just read through it all and you're like, "Yeah, God did a lot of things." But notice these words. They're on the screen, just so you can see them very clearly.

He says that his righteousness endures forever. That's not yesterday, that's forever. He remembers his covenant forever. His precepts are trustworthy. They are established forever. He has commanded his covenant forever. His praise endures forever. What is he saying here? He's saying that God is righteous and he's holy and he's these things forever. What that means is that if we've trusted Christ, that when we sin tomorrow, when it says that he commands his covenant forever, what that means is this. His righteousness, his holiness and his integrity form the backbone of that covenant to where when we sin and we think, "He's going to forsake me, he's going to forget me, He's going to leave me," God says, "I command on the basis of my righteousness that you will never be forgotten." Isn't that amazing news? In particular for us who are sinners is that he will never deny us. His promises are forever. So if God has given us this invitation, then let's trust God's faithfulness tomorrow.

You see, we can give and we can go on mission trips and we can share and we can serve, and we can do these things because God has made promises to supply us and strengthen us and to go before us. Hebrews chapter 11, verse one, says, "Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things unseen." Now, what does that mean? It means that faith is being so absolutely certain of God's promise that we behave in such a way so that other people would convict us of believing that promise.

For example, there's a lot of people in the world that have never heard the gospel and they live in really difficult places. We see the scriptures that says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all people." When you get on an airplane, other people who know why you're going, you have now given evidence that God is going to be faithful to his promise to go before you. This is what he's talking about. He's saying that you had hope so surely in what I have promised that it will come to pass tomorrow, that you will actually take me up on it so that your lifestyle bears evidence to other people that, man, you really believe God's going to come through, don't you? 'Cause you wouldn't put yourself out there like that if you didn't. So what God does is he says, "Listen, I want you to look back at everything that I've done and be amazed. I want you to look forward at everything that I'm going to do, and have hope."

That leads us to the third thing, and that's that God invites us to lean towards him. You see, what kind of person takes the time to look backwards at his grace, and what kind of person takes the time to hope in what God will do in the future? The answer comes in verse 10 when it says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord. In other words, the person who fears the Lord, that's who looks back and that's who hopes in the future. It's the people who fear the Lord. Now, because you and I have such sloppy experiences in life with fear, there's a lot of us that really struggle with how do I link up those two things? I remember what it's like to fear my dad, or what it was like to fear the bully, or what it's like to fear this or this or this on the earth where it's not very healthy. How am I supposed to translate that to how do I fear the Lord?

God doesn't want you to fear him like you fear the bully, so how are we supposed to fear him? The best way that my mind can ever conceive of understanding that answer is this, is to understand the effect. This is what I mean. When we fear man, we do things that run away from that man. When we rightly fear God, we do things that run to him. For those of you who have never trusted Christ as your savior and Lord, the Bible says that God's wrath is literally directed to you, at you, because of sin. You can't run away. You can't run far enough away from that wrath. So those who fear the Lord, what he means is you fear him enough to run to his grace, 'cause the only safe place from God's wrath is God's grace. So you have to run to him. For those of us who have already trusted Christ, when we run to him, what happens is we get into his presence and all of a sudden we become amazed at what he's done in the past and we become hopeful of what he does in the future.

In other words, if you want to understand how do you crush apathy in your life, you have to draw near to the Lord, because the presence of the Lord is what makes you to look back and makes you look forward. Do you fear the Lord? The fact that he's invited us to lean towards him. Here's the application. Let's worship God, even when our heart feels numb. I want to encourage you, do not wait for apathy to pass in order to sing or share or pray or go. 'Cause you may never do it.

There's another reason, though, and I want to talk about that just real brief, almost done. You cannot wait for apathy to pass. There is a grandfather, there's an old story of a grandfather who's with his grandson and they're talking about how the grandson feels, and he says, "Well, Grandpa, I feel like I have two wolves within my heart. One of them is compassionate. One of them is very angry." He says, "Grandpa, which wolf is going to win the fight?" The grandpa said, "Whichever wolf you feed."

You show up on a Sunday morning and it's time to worship, but your heart is cold. Which wolf wins? Whichever one you feed. God says, "Go therefore and make disciples," but we're apathetic about going on a mission trip. You've got two wolves in your heart. Which one is going to win? Whichever one you feed. I know I should pray, but I don't want to pray. Which one's going to win? Whichever one you feed. You see, singing to Jesus Christ when you don't feel like it is not fake, it's faith. It's saying, "You're worthy even when I feel cold." Jesus looked at an actual church on the earth back in Revelation chapter two, verses four and five, and says, "This is what I see. You've abandoned the love you had at first."

Then he gives him a remedy. How do you fix that? “Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent, and do the works you did at first.” It doesn’t say, wait till you have a really hot heart and then do those works. He says, how are you going to get that hot heart? You’re going to do those works.

You see, singing and praying and going and giving, they’re all acts of faith that says, “I trust God more than I trust myself right now.” This is so important that if you’re struggling right now with apathy towards going on a mission trip, the answer is to go. If you’re struggling right now with apathy and giving, the solution is to give. You see, God has assigned apathy breaking power to obedience. So, Providence, let’s lean into him and let’s lean in to the things that crush our apathy.

As part of our celebration this morning, we have the privilege to be able to commission a mission trip. In fact, they’re in the back, they’re all on their way up. This is Ryan Epley and a team. They’re going to be heading to Boston. What you need to know about them as they walk up over here is that not all of these people feel ready. Not all these people are free of fear. Not all these people are free every single day of their life of apathy. They’re just real people, and they’re just seeking to lean in to the Lord.

There in Boston, we have a partner church where there’s several churches in America where we partner, where they’re planting in areas to where there’s simply not a lot of gospel-preaching churches, where people simply can’t hear the gospel. We have the opportunity not only as a result of your giving, week by week by week here at Providence, we actually send money to a number of churches in their infancy state so that they can get strong enough to be self-reliant. But until that, we give. But not only do we give, but we send teams to be able to go and help them with outreach events and with VBSes and with things where we’re helping them engage their city, their culture, their people with the gospel.

So this team that is built, they’ll be leaving to go and in a number of different ways, their intent is to serve the local church and it’s to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people who don’t know it. In the New Testament, we see a model that the local church, when teams like this were built up and the Holy Spirit said, “These are the people who are supposed to go,” then the local church would lay hands on them and pray for them, and then they would be sent out. Now, in our context, it’s a little different because we’re in multiple rooms and ... But what we do here symbolically is something that maybe feel a little bit awkward, and particularly if you’re not in this room and you’re going to raise your hand to a screen, but the fact is, what we’re asking you to do is symbolically act like they have a shoulder, you have a hand. Just put your hand on their shoulder symbolically. Just raise your hand up and pray for that person as I pray for them, okay?

If you would. Let's pause and let's pray for them. Father, thank you for your grace, your grace, your grace that has opened up a way for us to be forgiven of our sin. We thank you for Jesus and we thank you that we can lean in towards Jesus and not only see amazing things you've done in our life, but we can have hope of things that you will do. God, ultimately, that's what we're praying for this team. That you have, in this world, in this time in our lives, you've done amazing things of opening up our eyes to see the importance of the gospel and how Jesus is utterly consequential to all of life. You opened up our eyes to see. You opened up our heart to believe, and you saved us. That's a wondrous work that we pray now in hope that you'll do again.

So, God, I pray for this team as they go. Would you protect them? Would you provide for them? God, would you give them hope and encouragement and unity and love? Not only for each other, but for the people that they will meet. And we pray that you would go before them right now, and the people that you know will intersect with our team members. God, would you prepare their hearts now to receive the gospel? God, we pray as a result of their going, Lord, that people, real people will come to faith in Jesus Christ. We thank you that we have the privilege to send them, we thank you that we all get to be involved in the sending work, and we pray, God, that you would do a miracle that would bring Jesus Christ glory. We thank you so much that we have the privilege to do this and to see this. We're amazed and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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