



## Sermon, Sunday July 2, 2023

# “The Lord is a Refuge for the Poor!”

**SCRIPTURE: Psalms 14:1-7** <sup>1</sup>Fools say in their hearts, “There is no God.” They are corrupt; they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. <sup>2</sup>The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God. <sup>3</sup>They have all gone astray; they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one. <sup>4</sup>Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the LORD? <sup>5</sup>There they shall be in great terror, for God is with the company of the righteous. <sup>6</sup>You would confound the plans of the poor, but the LORD is their refuge. <sup>7</sup>O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

### **Introduction: What is the most difficult thing in the Christian life of faith?**

Today is the fifth Sunday after Pentecost in the church calendar. What do you think is the most difficult thing in the Christian life of faith? Is the biggest challenge in your life of faith to keep reading the Bible, praying, and keeping a quiet time in your daily life? Or are you managing and using your wealth according to the will of the Lord? Or are you putting the Lord's love for your neighbor into practice in your life?

Of course, it is not easy to put these things into practice in our lives. However, the most difficult part in our life of faith is whether we recognize the Lord and live every moment with Him or not. To live with the Lord in our lives is to believe that the Lord is with us in every moment. And it is to live with an attitude of acknowledging that the Lord is also taking care of our thoughts and actions.

However, living with these beliefs and attitudes is not as easy as you think. Because, during our life of faith, there are situations where we experience the help of the Lord, but there are more cases where we do not. We are easily disappointed and frustrated when the Lord's answer to our immediate problems or prayers is delayed.

Today's text talks about the situation and the result that we encounter when we fail to recognize the Lord's work in our daily lives. What is clear is that the results of recognizing and living with the Lord in our lives and not living them are completely different. Today's text refers to those who live without seeking the Lord as 'fools', and those who live the opposite life as 'the poor'.

### **Body: Fools vs The Poor**

Scholars classify Psalm 14 as a personal petition. However, Psalm 14 is in a hybrid format with elements of wisdom, prophecy, and praise. Also, Psalm 14 is repeated in 2 Book of Psalm, Psalm 53. Further, Psalm 14 deals with the subject of “fools” and “the nature of fools.”

However, the 'fools' in Psalm 14 do not simply refer to those who lack intellectual ability. The psalmist says that even if their knowledge and ability are excellent, all those who live without acknowledging God are



foolish. Also, the 'fools' in today's text are those who lack 'God's mercy' because they do not acknowledge Him. Therefore, the opposite concept of 'fools' in today's text is not 'wisdom' but 'mercy'.

Like this, 'fools' are those who oppress the poor people of God due to lack of awareness of God. In fact, the word 'foolish' in today's text is called '**Nabal**' in Hebrew, but another meaning is '**senseless**'. Likewise, a person who is insensitive to God is a fool. Also, the fool denies God and does not seek God, and does evil instead of doing good.

But according to today's text, the fool ignores the poor. Verse 6 of the text says, **“You would confound the plans of the poor, but the Lord is their refuge.”** And verse 4 of the main text expresses the life of the evildoers more specifically, **“Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord?”** According to this verse, the evildoers devour God's people as they normally eat bread. Also, because they are insensitive to God, they are insensitive to devouring the poor.

By the way, the things described in today's text, Psalm 14, happen to be the same in the world we live in today. There are many rich, knowledgeable, and powerful people in the world. And the world moves according to the power of money, knowledge, and power. In a world like this, it's hard for people to believe that God intervenes in our lives.

In fact, I do not intend to criticize those who have attained wealth, power, or honor through sincerity and hard work. It is precious to race for the best effort in life. However, I am talking about our era of reverence for capital and power.

Of course, there are people in the past and in the present who sincerely seek God, do good, and live righteously. But, taken as a whole, many people in the world do not seek God or do good. The actions of these people show that they do not feel or acknowledge the reign of God as reality.

**So, Apostle Paul says in Romans 3:11-13: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”**

However, toward this generation and the world, the psalmist declares, “the Lord is their refuge.” This verse says that the Lord is a refuge for the poor.

Dear brothers and sisters! The goal of a Christian's life who believes in the Lord is unity with the Lord. Do you agree with me? Or do you have other goals? When we come into union with the Lord, we can experience God as the refuge of our lives. If we have not experienced the Lord as a refuge in our lives, even though we are in a position to be envied by the world and people, then when the things we believe to be the foundations of our happiness (money, fame, power, knowledge) fall apart, we will also experience life collapsing.

Then, what does it mean for God to be our refuge? Is it that the Lord solves the problem of our poverty and the various other problems we face?

In fact, when we pray to the Lord about our poverty and various problems, we often experience that our problems are solved. However, these things do not always happen consistently and repeatedly. Rather, even though we sincerely seek the Lord during our reality, our poverty or various problems are not resolved. In contrast to this, there are many people in the world who are rich or successful even though they do not believe in God.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! **“The Lord is a refuge for the poor”** does not mean that the poor will become rich or that our problems will be solved. What this means is that we hope only in God. In other words, it is to completely entrust our future to the Lord.

Please remember clearly. The new heaven and new earth that God will recreate is a world that cannot be ruled by the world order in which we live. In other words, it is a world where God directly rules. In that world,



even if you don't have money, fame, power, or knowledge, uncomfortable things don't happen. And even if you are poor, you don't have to be intimidated.

As Christians, we must have hope for the world that the Lord has promised. In a world ruled by God, the powerful and rich people of the world become rather pitiful people. Because the things they absolutely depended on become meaningless. Verse 5 of today's text expresses the appearance of such foolish people, **"There they shall be in great terror, for God is with the company of the righteous."**

If, as Christians, we hope for a world where God reigns, we must be able to participate more dynamically in real life.

### **Conclusion: God who exalts those who seek the Lord!**

Now let's summarize today's message. The Lord looks out over the world and exalts those who seek Him with a sense that God is walking through our lives and works every moment.

However, there are many foolish people in this world who turn away from God and live according to their own will. Furthermore, there are people who claim to believe in the Lord but live their lives thinking and acting as if the Lord does not exist. And they persecute and ignore the poor.

We cannot please the Lord with this attitude of faith. Instead, we should hope for a world where God directly rules. Also, we must be sure of the Lord's protection and promise of salvation given to those who seek Him and live a life in which we can more actively testify that the Lord is alive.

