

**Feb 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**Summerland United Church**  
**God is Holding Your Life: *Psalm 62 In God Alone***

**Threshold**

Turn now your gaze upon the earth  
Where is the One who never sleeps?  
We call the One who guards you now,  
Your spirit safe in holy keep.

God is holding your life  
God is holding your life  
God is holding our lives.

We're moving some dates around a little bit, for reasons that will be come clear later in the service and so today we are closing off our series on the psalms with Psalm 62, which speaks "My one and only!"

So many songs have utilised this phrase to express devoted love. This week we see that this tradition goes back all the way to the poets of the psalm tradition.

This is a love psalm of trust in the "Holy One and Only" who is the rock and refuge in the midst of life that sometimes feels as fleeting as breath. We put our trust in the One who, indeed, is holding our lives.

**Reading:** A reading from the Psalms. Number 62:

For God alone my soul waits in silence,  
for my deliverance comes from God,  
who alone is my rock, my salvation,  
my fortress:  
I will never be shaken.

How long will you besiege me  
as though I were a crumbling wall  
or a tottering fence?  
They connive to push me off a cliff:  
They delight in telling lies.  
With their mouths they utter blessing,  
But in their hearts, they curse.

*-selah -*

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
For my hope comes from God,  
Who alone is my rock, my salvation, my fortress:

I will never be shaken.

Only in God alone – my deliverance, my glory –  
My refuge is God.

Trust in God always, my people:  
Pour out your hearts before God our refuge.

Humankind is but a breath,  
mortals are just an illusion.  
Put them on the scales and the balance  
is thrown off:  
they weigh less than a breath.

Do not trust in extortion,  
or put false hopes in stolen goods;  
do not set your heart on riches  
even when they increase.

For God has said only one thing,  
Twice have I heard it:  
that power belongs to God:  
Steadfast love is yours, ADONAI –  
you repay all people according  
to their deeds.

May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Reflection:** I've spoken about the lectionary before – which, you may recall, is a 3 year cycle of biblical readings used by many Christians churches around the world. This gives a community of faith an opportunity to – over the course of 3 years – hear quite a lot of the bible texts. However, sometimes the texts are shortened or adjusted a little bit for context. Today's psalm is one example. It is present in the lectionary for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany in year B, which was actually a couple of weeks ago – Jan 21 – but rather than reading the full psalm the reading begins at verse 5. the lines are  
*“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
For my hope comes from God,  
Who alone is my rock, my salvation, my fortress:  
I will never be shaken.”*

Lines that are repeats of verses 1 and 2. The lines 3 -4 where the psalmist rages about people uttering curses and wanting to throw them off a cliff are left out.

And, as we've just heard, I made the choice to leave these lines in, because it's this lines that show us just how human the psalmist is. How they struggle, as we all can with interpersonal relationships. We don't know why the psalmist believes there are two

faced people in the world, saying one thing and doing another. We don't know what they've done or said to create such anger in the psalmist. But angry and frustrated the psalmist is. And knowing this about the writer reminds us of the humanity of the writer.

But the real reason I wanted to leave these lines in, is because for the way the psalm bookends their frustration with trust and faith in God. They refer to themselves as a *tottering fence, a crumbling wall* – but *God is a rock, a fortress, a strength for the psalmist that will hold them secure – I shall not be shaken.*

This matters so much to the psalmist, that it's repeated twice and with only a slight shifting in words from *my deliverance* in line one to *my hope* in line 5. We miss the importance of this idea if we only read from line 5.

*Trust in God always, my people: Pour out your hearts before God our refuge,* the psalmist says in line 8. For humanity, life, and mortality is fleeting. Riches and material things do not last, they are false riches, by comparison to the steadfast love of God which is enduring. The psalmist has heard this message from God, not once, but twice: *For God has said only one thing,  
Twice have I heard it:  
that power belongs to God:  
Steadfast love is yours, ADONAI –*

And for me, this double repeat is what the psalmist wants us to understand – The message from God they have heard it twice – so they share their own message twice *For God alone my soul waits in silence,  
for my deliverance comes from God,  
who alone is my rock, my salvation,  
my fortress:  
I will never be shaken.*

*For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
For my hope comes from God,  
Who alone is my rock, my salvation, my fortress:  
I will never be shaken.*

Did you notice that other slight change? *For God alone, my soul waits in silence.* The psalmist is saying this is something I do. I wait, my soul waits. This is something the psalmist does in the present. In the now.

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence. In line 5 the psalmist is telling his soul, telling themselves to do this. To keep doing this is an ongoing task and practice that gives the psalmist hope. The psalmist is saying you have done this, you do this and you will keep doing this.

Which I think is an excellent point for us to end our short Psalm series with. The purpose of this series was to reflect on the Psalms as poetry written to God, about God,

from the depth of our humanity. And to know that at the very depths of all the thoughts, emotions, actions and life events that make us human – God is always holding our lives.

This psalm, it seems me, is telling us all of these things as well. And encouraging us to recognise and remember this by pausing, by stopping and taking a breath, by waiting in silence for God alone. And in doing so we can experience the rock, the solid foundation that is God holding us. Holding our lives.

So we move into our time of intention silence, our Selah moment, and I invite you to hold these images from the psalms in your mind if that works for us. Or perhaps a word or phrase of today's psalm as we pause, as we wait in silence for God alone.

I will ring the bell to start our silence and then ring it again to end it.

## **Selah**

### *Time of Silence*

A "Selah" pause can also mean taking a moment to breath a prayer of thanksgiving in a random moment in our day, as we come across a flower or a breeze that reminds us to be grateful. As we have done every week in this series, we pause now for a moment. We will hear [the sound] and then have some silence. Feel free to close your eyes if you like. Imagine yourself held in safety and love and care. When you hear [the sound] again, open your eyes.