

SERMON DELIVERED AT AUBURN UMC, AUBURN, MICHIGAN

9th Sunday after Pentecost

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Text: Psalm 18

Title: “My God is a Rock: Solid Rock”

When hiking the mountains in the tundra above the tree line, there are places where you cannot see the trail. Sometimes it's because there is rock all around and there is no obvious path over or through them. Or it might be the area is consistently foggy. So hikers and backpackers build what are called cairns. A cairn is really a stack of rocks stacked in such a way that makes it obvious they are human made, so you know when you see one that you are headed in the right direction. So you walk to one cairn and look for the next, making your way on the trail one cairn at a time. You can't see the whole trail ahead of you, just one cairn at a time.

It's a great metaphor for the way life sometimes is. Sometimes we can't see very well what lies ahead. Sometimes we can feel lost and wonder where the trail is through whatever difficulty or challenge or unknown that we're facing. What the future holds, we just don't always know.

The biblical story is filled with people who could not see the whole trail, people who faced challenges and great unknowns. David was one of those faithful people who faced adversity and Psalm 18 is credited to him. In this poem, we hear the voice of one who did not know what the future held as he faced uncertainty:

4 The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of perdition assailed me;
5 the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.
6 In my distress I called upon the Lord;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.

This is a call for help in the midst of struggle and the fear of death, a voice calling upon God to guide, direct, assist him as he navigates his way through a frightening situation. It's a shout-out to God whom the poet has already affirmed.

1 I love you, O Lord, my strength.
2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,

my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
3 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,
so I shall be saved from my enemies.

This is a prayer of hope in the midst of uncertainty, a reminder to any and all who find themselves in a situation that we can't see through, that God is faithful and good. God is rock: solid, strong, dependable, enduring. And when we can't see exactly where we are going, there is comfort knowing that we don't need to see the whole trail. All we need to see is the next cairn. Sometimes it's a one-day-at-a-time kind of life, isn't it? We look for the small signs of God's goodness and faithfulness, and that's just what we need to get to the next sign, all the while trusting and knowing that God is good. Some things in life aren't always good. Human beings aren't always good, but the God revealed in Jesus is. And that can give us all the hope we need to trust that the next cairn is just ahead where once again God will give us the strength to face the next challenge.