

BELPRES CHURCH

SOUL CARE

Rev. John Kim

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We ask for your supernatural presence to comfort and bring healing to our communities here on the East side and to the world all in the saving name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. All of God's people online said amen.

Now good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us online. My name is John Kim. I'm one of the pastors here. Now, no matter where you're from, how old you are, where you're watching from, or how you're dressed this morning, we're glad that you're here. Now, if you're a guest with us today, we'd love to welcome you. Our online worship host will let you know how to do that in the chat window.

Now, one of the things I think about a lot now that we've been living in the stay-at-home guidelines for over 28 days, can you believe it, is doing the things that I really enjoy. One of them is smoking barbecue for friends and family, and the other is being out by the ocean. I absolutely love the Pacific Northwest. Some of you know that I love to scuba dive. One of my favorite all-time places to scuba dive is in Montego Bay, Jamaica. I'll never forget my dive partner, Rambo. Yes, that was his name, who must've been moonlighting as a Jamaican bodybuilding Hulk. I mean, this guy was absolutely huge. Rambo owned a small dive shop and was my dive buddy for the week. I knew it was going to be a perfect day for scuba diving, so I thought.

As we got down to about 60 feet, one thing I noticed was the water currents. They were extremely fast. In the blink of an eye, I was in a different place than before. Luckily, Rambo was right next to me guiding me to our dive spot, which was a shipwreck for that day. After touring the wreck, I continued to follow Rambo. Pretty soon, I saw every sea creature you could imagine. I felt Rambo pull on me to look at something. I realized that there was a shark about 25 feet away. I was floored. My heart felt like it stopped. I was scared. When I looked at Rambo, he just smiled back at me. I was scared, but he continued to comfort me. Pretty soon, all the fish I saw swimming around me... They're all gone. They disappeared.

I didn't just see one shark. Another one popped in. My heartbeat started to skip. Still, as I looked at Rambo, he smiled and continued to point at the sharks. I told myself, "If Rambo is smiling, I should enjoy

this moment." Soon, I saw not just two sharks, but three, four, five. Six sharks were swimming all around us. Then just as soon as I look for Rambo's reassuring smile, he was gone. I mean, I looked everywhere. He just disappeared. The sharks started coming closer and closer. I thought, "How is it that every dive I made this week in Montego Bay, I come to another near-death experience?" I froze and fear took hold of me.

I think all of us have experienced fear this past month in some form or fashion. Seeing how fast the virus was spreading throughout our city, how many of us have someone we know that has been affected by this horrible disease? Life has completely changed for all of us. Our schedule of school, work, friends, family... All have turned upside down. Some of us have experienced financial ruin. For some of us, our marriages and relationships are at a point of breakage. This past Thursday, our Prayer and Care Director, McCayla Butler, shared this quote with our staff team from Alice Ryan. "Grief is the stress response for separation. Grief is a stress response for separation." She shared that with all of us, that we are experiencing some sort of grief because of this COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the exercises she had us go through on Zoom was writing down on a post-it note: What are some of the losses that we have been going through during this time? Some of our staff shared the loss of their children missing out on school, the loss of being able to care for aging parents, the loss of being able to see their children or their grandchildren, the loss of celebrating special anniversaries, the loss of their high school student celebrating their senior year and missing this most important aspect of life.

We all are experiencing grief in some way. Can I encourage you, after the sermon, ask your spouse, your kids, your friends, your parents: What loss have you been going through during this time? Listening and identifying loss is a step toward healing. As God listens to us, we too should listen to others. We are seeing the physical, mental, and spiritual health issues rise. More than ever, we need a healthy soul to navigate these uncharted waters. We need a healthy soul that is about living from a place of overflow where we learn to have authentic relationships, learn to pray, to rest, to read, and to open up to God's presence, His guidance, and ultimately, His love. Soul care is about boldly trusting in God's protection and promises where we live courageously in His power, under His direction, and in His way.

How do we have soul care? Now, the Bible gives us a recipe for soul care. That's found in the book of Psalms, Psalm 91. We'll see that soul care begins with knowing God. Look at verses 1 and 2. "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" Now, I don't know about you, but life seems draining much more so now than ever before. Many of us are finding that there seems to be no time or place to rest. These verses are reassuring, comforting, and encouraging. When things appear to be their worst, I tend to shut down. I tend to just space out. Now our natural tendency is to get down and miss out on what God may be doing in our situation. When I find myself in this negative space, my goal is to reorient my heart to fend off the negative and to say of the Lord that He is my God, in whom I can trust, just as the writer of the Psalm did.

Now in these verses, there are four names for God: the Most High, the Almighty, the Lord, and my God. Why is this important and what does this teach us? Well, each of the names of God has a divine attribute. Understanding and believing that He is each attribute will cause that attribute to flow into our lives. The first name of God mentioned in Psalm 91, the Most High, or in Hebrew, Elyon, which means He is the Most High God. There is no one higher than Him. He is the possessor of heaven and earth. The

verse goes on to refer to God as the Almighty. In Hebrew, it is El Shaddai, the God who blesses you with more than enough, more than you can contain. In His name and in His power, there is no need that cannot be met and no circumstance that He cannot overcome.

Now the second verse of Psalm 91 contains two other names for God. The Psalmist declares, "I will say of the Lord." He is referring to Yahweh or Yehovah, the covenant-keeping God. It is the holiest name of the Lord, the name Jewish scribes treat with the most utmost reverence and respect. Now, do you know that Jesus's name in Hebrew is Yeshua and it actually means "Yahweh saves"? It is not Yahweh judges. The name, Jesus, means "Yahweh saves". If you need help, Yahweh saves. If you are sick, Yahweh saves. If you have enemies that are coming against you, Yahweh saves. Whatever saving you need, Jesus is the answer for His name means "Yahweh saves". Can I get an online amen?

Amen.

The Psalmist in verse 2 goes on to say, "My God, in whom I trust." Now the word "God" here refers to Elohim, the God of power, and creator, the God who created the heavens and the earth. This is our God. He is the one we put our trust in. In just two verses, you will find four names of God mentioned. Knowing, believing, and saying He is all these to us gives us protection in our everyday situations. He will deliver and rescue the one who knows His name. We see the beauty of God. His ways are higher than our ways, yet we speak to Him as a friend. Isn't that incredible? God is at the same time unsearchable, yet so very near to us. In His shadow and in His shelter, we find strength, comfort, and rest for our souls.

First, soul care begins with knowing God. Second, soul care is God's supernatural protection over us. It's amazing what soul care can do in the midst of intense persecution. A few years ago, I went with a team from BelPres to Greece to learn about the refugee crisis. One particular person, his story... I will never forget. His name was the [Zdon 00:12:21]. Zdon is an example of soul care, someone who lives in this supernatural overflow of God's presence and protection. He originally was in the Syrian Navy, a zealous Muslim, hated Christians. Because of the Syrian war, he lost everything, and became homeless, and became a refugee in Greece. He prayed and he prayed to his Muslim God for help, but there was no answer. It was when he met a Christian who disciplined him, who helped him, and shared the love of Christ and how Christ ultimately saves us, Zdon came to trust in Jesus. From that point on, he started to share his faith to other refugees, also helping them with food, with jobs and shelter.

Zdon said that God protects him and the Christian refugees every second and provides for them every day. When we met, he was at a Greek Orthodox church basement teaching Syrian refugees how to fix cars so that they could become mechanics and get jobs. The place was packed with men, women, and children. Zdon told us that through this, he builds trust, and develops relationships with the refugees, and is able then to share his faith in Jesus. He said his church was over 1,400 refugees and that just this past month, he baptized over 80 people. We asked him where his church meets, tell us more about his ministry. He told us that he receives constant death threats from the Muslim leaders in the city. He does everything underground and in secrecy. He uses his phone to text his leaders and they, the church, move from place to place to meet and worship.

It was crazy. As I was trying to get more information, he gave less and less. They live day by day. When someone offered them a space to meet, he would text his leaders and soon, church just happened. No specific schedule, no specific time, no specific place... Things happened on the fly. That was his ministry and his church. Can you imagine if we did that today? I mean, we would go nuts. We would complain. We would send emails to Scott Dudley. You know what's interesting? Ask yourself this. Is our life, our education, our jobs, our relationships, the stuff that we have the basis of our soul care? Or, is our soul care based on the complete trust that God will sustain and protect us no matter what circumstance that life brings? I wonder if God is using this time to help us understand that soul care is not based on the things we do or have, but rooted in our relationship to Him.

In just two verses, I was blown away by the significance of the four names of God. Can you imagine how much more we can learn about God as we read through His Word? Can I make a suggestion? For this next week, read through some of the Psalms. Now there are 150 of them. It's not about how many you read. Now here's a list of some of my favorite Psalms, Psalms that speak to comfort, protection, lament, praise, worship, forgiveness. Take just 30 minutes a day. That's your homework for this week, BelPres. In verses 3 through 7, or 3 through 8, God gives His protection to those who love Him in different ways. In verse 3, God protects us from traps and sickness. In 4, God protects our mental and physical being. In verse 5, God protects us from fear. Verse 6, God protects us from disease. In verse 7, God protects us from overwhelming odds that are against us. Verse 8, God protects us from evil people.

Now I know what you're thinking. Yes, but what about those who are sick, those that have died, those that have lost their jobs? Doesn't this Psalm say the opposite? I do want to say that God is not a vending machine where you put in a dollar and you get something out. I don't know why God allows for some prayers to be answered in yes while others are not. Let me read you a quote by Nabeel Qureshi who was one of the most important Christian apologists of our day. He died of cancer in 2017, at the age of 34. He answers this for us. He said, "What the resurrection means is that if it comes to a point in your life where it seems that even death is inevitable and there's no way to escape it, well, death is not the end. There is more. There is hope no matter what."

I love what Jesus says in John, chapter 16, verse 33. "In the world, you will have trouble, but take courage. I have conquered the world." Now look at verse 5. "You will not fear the terror of night nor the arrow that flies by day." I want to focus on that word "arrow". Now, some of you know that my youngest kiddo is an archer. She is actually an Olympic recurve archer. What I did is I brought her bow to show you her bow and arrow. This is actually the most current recurve bow that you can get on the market. Now it's very similar in form and function to the bows that we've had even in the time of the Psalms.

Now this bow is made up of different components. It's got a riser which is its base. Attached to the riser are carbon-formed limbs. There is a string. There's the arrow. You've got a stabilizer. You've got a sight. All of these things are designed so that the archer can aim and hit a target about 200 feet away and in a diameter of 4.8 inches of a yellow circle that's the center of the target. That's what Emma is aiming for every time she shoots her bow.

Now what's interesting is this arrow. I want to take a moment and talk about this arrow. Now, this arrow is made up of carbon material. It has a point that is made up of tungsten material. It has a nock and it's got fletchings. This arrow is uniquely designed for the archer, again, to hit a target 200 feet away. It's all designed. These arrows are designed to hit a target. Now think about this. The arrow, whatever that may

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be, lust, envy, anger, jealousy, bitterness, materialism, gossip, idols, pride... The enemy launches attacks at you, and that enemy is equipped to kill you. I know what you're thinking. What chance do I have when the enemy is designed to attack my weaknesses in where it hurts the most? This is where I want you to understand that while the enemy is shooting arrows at you, God supernaturally protects you from those attacks, and you don't have to fear.

That's the message of these verses. You don't have to be paralyzed. God is your shield and your protector. Jesus went to the cross, gave His life as a sacrifice so that you could have a new life, a life overflowing with God's power and presence. Jesus paid the price for our sin. He died on that cross on Calvary, but that wasn't the end. The story is just the beginning. Jesus rose again from the dead. On the third day, he sent his Holy Spirit to indwell us and to empower us as new creations. The old has gone. The new has come. The arrows can't touch us. We live as people of God, loving God with our whole hearts and loving others as ourselves. BelPres, this coronavirus can't keep us down. The arrows can't touch us. BelPres, this time is for us. We will start a revival in our hearts, in our families, in our church. That will spread to our city and to the world. Can I get an amen online?

Amen.

Soul care begins with knowing God. Soul care is God's supernatural protection over us. Third, soul care is about resting in the promises of God. In verses 14 through 16, there are eight promises God makes to those who love Him. They are, "I will rescue you. I will protect you. I will answer you. I will be with you in trouble. I will save you. I will honor you. I will give you abundance in life. I will show you my salvation." Now, if you remember, I was alone. Sharks were circling all around me. Rambo disappeared.

Everywhere I looked, I saw the shadows of death around me. I was frozen in fear, paralyzed. As soon as I thought that I was a goner, Rambo grabbed my arm and he pulled me to him. He came out of nowhere and he pulled me into a current. In the blink of an eye, we were moving in this powerful sea current. Soon, we found ourselves in a different area, and there were no sharks.

Rambo was already pointing me to look at the sea turtle. He smiled with this big grin like nothing. Just happened a few minutes ago. As I looked at his smile, I turned to look at the sea turtle. I got lost in the beauty of the marine wildlife all around me. I had forgotten all about those sharks. After the dive, I asked Rambo where he was when all those sharks came. You know what he said to me? He said that he was right there next to me the entire time. Huh. In my fear, I think I was just so focused on the sharks moving all around me, I didn't recognize and realize that Rambo was right next to me the entire time.

Sometimes we get so focused on what our fears are that we miss seeing God right next to us. We miss experiencing the supernatural current of the Holy Spirit taking us away from our enemies and trusting in our relationship to Jesus who loves us so much that he gave His life up for us and now is our resurrected Savior. Church, in this season, God has limited us in movement. He has slowed us down and purposefully made us stop so that we could see Him, truly see Him as a source of our soul care. We don't have to fear because he promises to be there right beside us to be our protector. Let's worship Elyon, El Shaddai, Elohim, Yahweh, my God, our God who is our refuge and our fortress, our God, in whom we can trust.

Father, thank you so much for this Psalm. Thank you for the soul care that you give us each and every day. Help us to trust you more and help us to walk with you, talk with you, love you, and love those around us. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

Discussion Questions: Read Psalm 91:1-16

1. What is the significance of the words shelter and shadow (v.1)? What do these words suggest?

What is the significance of the words dwell and rest (v.1)? What do these words suggest?

2. What four names for God are used in 91:1-2 and what is something that each name reveals about God?

3. In verses 3-8, why does the psalmist feel secure from danger?

4. In Psalm 91:11-12, God promises protection in the form of angels. Could angels be guarding your life? Are there any instances that you were miraculously delivered or protected?

5. What eight promises does God make in 91:14-16?