



PRAYER SERVICE WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16TH, 2021

Join us at 7pm in the Sanctuary or on [Facebook](#) and use this guide to pray along with us.

• INTRO

Welcome to Prayer Service! Every week we pray through the Psalms, one chapter at a time. It's a moment to pause from the rush of life, to come together, to be with God, and to feast on the Word. Psalm 36 has been regarded by many students of Scripture through the ages as a truly special prayer. 19th-century Anglican Bishop, John Perowne, once wrote: *"These are among the most wonderful words in the Old Testament. Their fulness of meaning no commentary can exhaust."* Suffice it to say, *we're in for a good time!* As we prepare to dive in, here's the big picture: have you ever looked around at the evil and chaos of the world, the seeming success of wicked-hearted people, and felt that sinking feeling of helplessness and despair? Sometimes, evil just seems too powerful to resist—whether that which we find in the world or in our own hearts. Psalm 36 begins with a profound contemplation on the nature of the sinful heart, contrasted by an even greater contemplation on the surpassing goodness of God. It gives us the path to hope, setting our minds upon the God of life and light, whom we know is supremely revealed in Jesus Christ. As we reflect and pray through this Psalm, let's acknowledge the pain and darkness of this world, and then choose to set our hearts and minds upon the greatness of God. As we come to a place of rest, trusting in his ultimate goodness, we'll find hope to continue *seeking his Kingdom first* in all things. *Let's pray.*

• PAUSE

"As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God." (Pete Greig, Lectio365)

"Jesus, I give everything and everyone to you. I give everything and everyone to you, God."
(John Eldredge, Daily Pause)

Pause and pray.

As we read **Psalm 36** together, be open with the parts that confuse or challenge you; meditate on the parts that stand out to you:

"1 I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before their eyes. 2 In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin. 3 The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful; they fail to act wisely or do good. 4 Even on their beds they plot evil; they commit themselves to a sinful course and do not reject what is wrong. 5 Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. 6 Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep. You, LORD, preserve both people and animals. 7 How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. 8 They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. 9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. 10 Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart. 11 May the foot of the proud not come against me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away. 12 See how the evildoers lie fallen—thrown down, not able to rise!"

- **SONGS**

“Your Love Oh Lord”

VERSE

Your love O Lord reaches to the heavens
Your faithfulness stretches to the sky
Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains
Your justice flows like the ocean's tide

CHORUS

I will lift my voice
To worship You my King
I will find my strength
In the shadow of Your wings

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“Graves Into Gardens”

VERSE 1

I searched the world but it couldn't fill me
Man's empty praise and treasures that fade
Are never enough
Then You came along and put me back together
And every desire is now satisfied here in Your love

VERSE 2

I'm not afraid to show You my weakness
My failures and flaws
Lord You've seen them all
And You still call me friend
'Cause the God of the mountain
Is the God of the valley
And there's not a place
Your mercy and grace won't find me again

CHORUS

Oh there's nothing better than You
There's nothing better than You
Lord there's nothing
Nothing is better than You

BRIDGE

You turn mourning to dancing
You give beauty for ashes
You turn shame into glory
You're the only one who can
You turn graves into gardens
You turn bones into armies
You turn seas into highways
You're the only one who can

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- **PSALM 36:1-4**

“¹ I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before their eyes. ² In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin. ³ The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful; they fail to act wisely or do good. ⁴ Even on their beds they plot evil; they commit themselves to a sinful course and do not reject what is wrong.”

The first part of this Psalm is a profound reflection on sin. The fundamental truth here is that evil is about a total orientation toward *self*, to the exclusion of God and others. The heart of sin is, “all that matters is *me*; I am the center.” It’s about more than just momentary, bad decisions, but actions that become habits that become character, “a sinful course” of life. It’s the personal, spiritual equivalent of a blackhole. And it’s all pretty dark and depressing to think about. It takes an even heavier turn when we realize, with the whole witness Scripture, that this “sin” thing isn’t just about holding up a rubric to everyone else, looking at the “worst of the worst” in humanity, but looking into our own hearts. “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” All of us need to be rescued from this sickness.

So, as we contemplate the nature of sin with this Psalm, let's hold it up to our own hearts before God: what do we find there? What's in the center of my heart? Is my thinking and living these days mostly dominated by *myself*? In my day to day life, am I still more or less the "center of the universe"? Is there any room for Christ? The antidote to the inward, self-focused heart enslaved to sin is the opposite: dying to self, living through Christ, God becoming the center. This kind of life moves outward in self-giving love, bringing goodness and light by the grace of God. Now is the time to search our hearts, invite Jesus in to bring healing and make us holy like he is. *Pause and pray.*

- **PSALM 36:5-9**

"⁵ Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. ⁶ Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep. You, LORD, preserve both people and animals. ⁷ How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. ⁸ They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. ⁹ For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light."

Here, the focus changes abruptly to *God*, sharply contrasting the darkness of evil with the surpassing goodness of God. This part of the Psalm is probably what has led many to rank these among the most profound words of the Old Testament. The goodness of God is so much greater than the darkness of evil. We find in these words a foreshadow of what the New Testament describes in Christ: "the life and light of God," "the bread of life," the one who gives "living water," "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it," (John 1:5). The prayer began with an observation on the *vision* of the wicked: "*There is no fear of God before their eyes...in their own eyes they flatter themselves...*" Now, this contemplation of God's goodness ends with a completely different kind of *vision*: "*For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.*" You could swim through those depths for days and not touch the bottom—but let's go ahead and dip our toes in tonight. Meditate on this verse and let it move you to prayer and worship. *Pause and pray.*

"For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light."

- **PSALM 36:10-12**

"¹⁰ Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart. ¹¹ May the foot of the proud not come against me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away. ¹² See how the evildoers lie fallen—thrown down, not able to rise!"

Too often as we become overwhelmed by the darkness we see in this world, we consider God from the context of evil. This prayer teaches us to completely reverse that: we must consider darkness from the context of God's eternal light. From this perspective, when compared with the eternal life and light of God in his all-sufficient goodness—darkness is a weak, feeble, fleeting thing. His Love wins. Period. J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* once wrote in a letter to his son: "*Evil labors with vast power and perpetual success—in vain: preparing always only the soil for unexpected good to sprout in.*" We should not downplay the challenges of suffering, wickedness, and evil in this world, but we must put it in the proper context of God's infinite love, wisdom, and power. "For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light." We see this light and life in Jesus Christ, who took on darkness and death for us, laying down his life to give us the victory. In his light, we see light, in his life, we have the victory. Let faith, hope, and love rise in your heart tonight. *Pause and pray.*

- **SONG**

“Be Thou My Vision”

VERSE 1

Be Thou my vision
O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me
Save that Thou art
Thou my best thought
By day or by night
Waking or sleeping
Thy presence my light

VERSE 2

Be Thou my wisdom
And Thou my true Word
I ever with Thee
And Thou with me Lord
Thou my great Father
And I Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling
And I with Thee one

VERSE 3

Be Thou my battle shield
Sword for the fight
Be Thou my dignity
Thou my delight

Thou my soul's shelter
And Thou my high tow'r
Raise Thou me heav'nward
O pow'r of my pow'r

VERSE 4

Riches I heed not
Nor man's empty praise
Thou mine inheritance
Now and always
Thou and Thou only
First in my heart
High King of heaven
My treasure Thou art

VERSE 5

High King of heaven
My victory won
May I reach heaven's joys
O bright heaven's Sun
Heart of my own heart
Whatever befall
Still be my vision
O Ruler of all

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- **Closing**

“Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to you in every way. Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet. Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. Amen.” (Pete Greig, Lectio365)