

RE-CALCULATING

Preached: 1/3/2021; 2nd Sunday of Christmas – Germantown;

Opening Scripture

Hebrews 12:1b-3

Opening Prayer

Scripture

Psalm 40

Message

Re-Calculating

If you have ever used a GPS device while driving, or ridden in a car where a GPS was being used, you have likely heard this word: **Re-Calculating**. You may be driving along, enjoying the scenery, or you may be engaged in conversation with a passenger, or you may have the music turned way up and your singing along, and then you hear that word: **Re-Calculating**. You suddenly realize that you weren't paying attention to your computer assistant who has been giving you directions so you could reach your destination, but you missed some step. You didn't make a turn, "she" wanted you to make, or you turned the wrong way, and now "she" must calculate a new route to help you get to where you wanted to go. Sometimes it is an easy fix, just take the next turn and it will lead you back to the correct route. Sometimes it is more difficult, "**Make a U-Turn**".

RE-CALCULATING.

There are times in our lives when we may need to do some "**RE-CALCULATING.**" We might be going along, things are going well for us. We are enjoying the journey, but then we discover that we are off a bit. We may not be heading in a direction that we wanted. We may have got into a rut or coasted into a ditch. Its time to make a course adjustment. Transitioning from one year into a new year, may be a time to do some **RE-CALCULATING.**

I've been looking at Psalm 40 this week, and I've seen some lessons about **RE-CALCULATING.** As the writer reflects on his life, it seems that he has been going along, enjoying life, even having a positive impact on the lives of other people. But then he discovers that he is "Off course". He has lost his way, and he needs some help to get back on track. Let's take a look and learn with him.

When we are reading the Psalms, it is helpful for us to know the specific context. What were the circumstances that led to the composition of this particular Psalm. We usually find that information in a heading. **For example**, Psalm 51 is a prayer of confession and repentance. The heading tells us that Psalm 51 was composed after the prophet Nathan came to David and confronted him about committing adultery with Bathsheba. This Psalm – Psalm 40 - does not provide us with much information about the writing of the Psalm. The heading tells us that it was written for the director of music, and that it is a Psalm of David. That's all we know. So we don't know any specific story that prompted David to write this. It appears he simply wanted to praise God, and encourage others to trust Him.

Part 1, vs. 1-4: The Psalm begins with a time of reflection. David is thinking about his life, and how good God has been to him. This reflection arouses feelings of joy and contentment in David's heart. The Psalm begins with David telling us how God has blessed him. "***I waited patiently for the LORD***". If we were writing this Psalm we may have said, "I waited, and waited....." Apparently David had been praying to God for some time regarding a particular need. He had to persevere in prayer. We must learn that God's timing does not always match our timing. Sometimes we must be persistent in our praying and trusting Him. As David waits, God finally responds. The wording is encouraging. "***He turned to me and heard my cry***" It is difficult for us to understand how God can give his undivided attention to one individual, when so many people are praying to Him at once. But that is God. When you pray, cry out to the Lord, it may feel sometimes as if no one is paying attention. But God is focused on you. He is transfixed by your words. Just because we do not get the thing that we ask for, does not mean God is not paying attention. David is relieved to know that God heard him.

David then lists God's responses: **"He lifted me out of a slimy pit; He set my feet on a solid place; He put a new song in my mouth"** While we do not know what prompted David's feelings of fear and panic, we do know that now David feels safe again. David no longer feels as if he is going under, that he is going down for the last time.

Part 2 – Who will you trust? (Vs. 4-5). David now turns his attention to helping others. As a result of God's deliverance of him, David is now aware that many other lives will be impacted by his experience. **"Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him..."** God can use our times of hardship to bless us, but He can also use our difficulties to help others, to point others to Him. David has discovered the blessing of knowing and trusting God, but that is not enough for him. The desire of his heart is that others would come to trust him as well. As David observes, people have two choices – 1. They can either look to the Lord for help in times of need, or 2. They can look elsewhere. David says they can look to the proud. Now, when we are in trouble, it is good to have friends and counselors. But David says, the danger comes when we look to those who think they know it all – the proud. He suggests that those who are proud may in fact be influenced by false gods. But David has discovered that **trusting God is a better choice**. David has witnessed the wonders and mighty deeds of God and has decided that God has no rival. None can compare with you, he says.

Part 3, Rededication: (Vs.6-10). As David has reflected on God's goodness to him, and as he has witnessed to others, David now is moved to re-consider his own commitment to God. In verse 6, David says something that may be difficult to understand: **"Sacrifice and offerings you did not desire, but my ears you have opened – burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require..."** We know that in the books of the law, God does instruct his people to bring sacrifices and offerings to the Lord. The laws about sacrifices were quite extensive and detailed. What would David mean now, by suggesting that God does not desire Sacrifices and offerings? I believe that what David wants us to understand here is that God wants more than just our formal religious expressions, especially if they are empty of meaning, or if we are just going through the motions. David says that God has opened his ears, God's word has penetrated his heart. God wants something more.

Vs. 7 & 8: Here I am, I have come...I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart" I have seen some posts on Facebook where people are asking for suggestions for a word or verse for 2021. As I have been looking at this Psalm this week, it seems to me that this would be a good verse to commit to memory and live by in the coming year: **Here I am, I have come, I desire to do your will, my God; your law is in my heart."** Does God have your heart? Does God have your obedience? That's what He wants more than anything else.

Part 4 – I need your help again. When we come to Verse 11, there is a noticeable change in the tone of the Psalm. Up to this point David has written about the Goodness of God, and his desire to live a life that would honor God and impact others. But now we find David looking to the Lord for mercy and deliverance. David again finds himself in a difficult place. He is "Off Track". We do not know what the symptoms were – sickness, attack. And we are not told what has brought this difficulty on. It may be because of his own failures. In verse 12-13, David is suddenly aware of his sinfulness. **"My sins have overtaken me..."** The Bible does not cover up the flaws and failures of its heroes. We are aware that David was not a perfect man. He was an adulterer. He committed murder. He was prideful and arrogant sometimes. For some reason, he now feels alienated from God again. (Vs. 1). Some distance has grown between him and His Lord. Once again, he must call on God to come and help him. It also appears that some of David's troubles have come because of his enemies. Others were attacking him. So whether it is the result of his own failure, or the result of the attacks of others, he now must look to the Lord again. It is time for some **RE-CALCULATING**. He must turn his attention back to the Lord and seek Him. Whatever may have distracted him and turned his attention from the Lord, he now reminds himself of God's faithfulness: **"THE LORD IS GREAT!"**

David concludes the Psalm by recognizing that he is poor and needy. No matter that David was a great and powerful king. David defeated Goliath. David led the people of God into battle against their enemies and been victorious. But no matter that David has achieved some significant victories, He must acknowledge his need for the Lord. When we turn to the Lord for help, our attitude should be one of humility and emptiness. We must recognize our poverty. In the beatitudes that begin the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pronounces blessing on those who are poor in spirit. The word that Jesus uses there for poor means, completely destitute. Unless someone else helps, we are completely doomed. That is David's attitude here. Unless God helps him he will be lost. His closing prayer is this: **"You are my help and my deliverer; you are my God, do not delay."** If

David has forgotten who to trust, that he needs God's help as much as anyone, he must once again turn to the Lord.

As you reflect on your relationship with God as we enter a new year, I wonder how you are doing. Can you think back and recognize all of the ways that God has blessed you, the times that God has pulled you out of the mud and put you on solid ground again? Are you aware of how God's love for you has encouraged and blessed others? Give thanks to God for His past goodness to you.

But do some reflecting. Where are you today? Has your faith wavered? Does it feel like you are just going through the motions of worship, prayer and devotion to God. Maybe its time for some Course corrections. Maybe the voice of the Spirit of God is whispering into your heart: **RE-CALCULATING**, calling you to get back on track. Is He calling you to turn from trusting yourself and turn back to God again. Perhaps he is challenging you to recognize your poverty of spirit, and cry out to the Lord again. Maybe its time to declare, again: "**Here I am, I have come!**" Don't miss this opportunity to renew your faith and trust in God.