

Getting the Chorus Right

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Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0 : 00] Well, I'd like us to turn together again to Sam 61, and we've spent, this is our second week looking at this Sam, we look together at the first part, and we'll look together at the whole Sam again today, but I guess more towards the second part.

Last week we said that the Sam's are like all other songs, and they are like no other songs. And they're like all other songs, in that all over the world today there's songs written and sung that speak so powerfully into our experiences.

So all the things we have, joy, sorrow, romance, heartbreak, we can all think of songs that capture those experiences so powerfully, and that's what makes songs such an influential part of our lives because they connect in such a powerful way.

The Sam's do exactly the same thing. So even though they're old, most of them are in the 3000 year old mark, and they still speak with so much relevance into what we experience today.

But at the same time, although Sam's are like all other songs, in another way they are like no other songs. Because they don't just connect with our lives in a unique way the Sam's connect us with God.

[1 : 13] They connect us with our Creator, with our Savior. Because God is the ultimate writer of the Sam's. He's the songwriter, and often these Sam's will point back to the creation, to the fact that God is our Creator.

But even more so, Sam's point forward. They point forward towards the coming of Jesus. And one of the things we said last week was that there's a sense in which the Sam's are just like, are just verses.

They are verses that yes, frequently strike a chord with our lives, but there's a sense in which Sam's are only ever verses. Because the chorus doesn't arrive until the coming of Jesus.

And so whenever we read the Sam's, we want to think about how the Sam's connect with our lives. But we also want to think about how the Sam's connect with Jesus. And so last week we looked at the first sort of aspect of that, and we thought more about the connections with our lives.

And we saw that this Sam is the song of an exhausted heart, as verses one to two capture so powerfully. Hear my cry, oh God, listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to you, where my heart is faint, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

[2 : 32] In all our weakness and exhaustion of heart, God is a rock, a refuge, a tower. He's the one where we can find safety. But all of that's because of Jesus.

And I want us to look at that in a little bit more detail this week. I want us to see how this Sam connects to our Saviour. So we're saying that every Sam is really just a verse.

And they're all setting you up for the chorus that's coming. But the chorus doesn't come in the book of Sam's. The chorus comes in the New Testament. The chorus comes in the personal work of Jesus.

And so our title today is all about that. Our title is Getting the Chorus Right. So how does this Sam connect with Jesus? Well I want to suggest to you that there are two key words in this Sam and you get these words in lots of other Sam's as well.

Two key words that connect this song to Jesus. The key words are enemy and king.

[3 : 40] These two words appear all over the Sam's. They're both pointing us to Jesus. I want us to look at them in turn. So first of all, enemy.

Now of the two, this is the one that probably requires a bit more explanation. If you read through the Sam's as we sing them you'll have noticed, I'm sure, that the Sam's speak a lot about enemies.

Sometimes that's in terms of distress. But sometimes it's in terms of attack. And there are frequent occasions when the Sam's will speak about enemies being destroyed.

Here's a couple of examples. So Sam 69 speaks in terms of distress. I'm sinking in the mire. Let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. Sam 43 which is, we sang from this Sam. This is later on. It says, for your namesake preserve my life and your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble. In your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies. You will destroy all the adversaries of my soul for I am your servant.

[4 : 39] That kind of language is very common in the Sam's. I think that for many of us we probably have to be honest and say that we can find that language a little bit difficult. And I think there's various reasons for that.

I think one of the reasons why we find that language of enemies difficult is because this is for us today one area that probably doesn't connect that much without experience because we have not had direct experience of enemies in the way that the Sam's did.

And few of us, if any of us have ever had any direct experience of war, even though when we say that we must never ever forget that for so many people in the world they know exactly what this is like.

So we can find it hard because we don't have as much direct experience of this but we can also find it hard because even though we maybe don't have war on our doorstep like many other people we still have it in our news headlines all the time.

And I think even these last few weeks, even these last few days the reality of conflict in the globe has just become more pressing and more apparent things feel like they're escalating.

[5 : 52] And when that happens I think for most if not all of us our instinctive longing is for peace. When there's conflict we just want it to end, we just want there to be reconciliation on all sides.

So enemies is kind of a difficult concept for us to sort of think about, sometimes it can be hard for us to embrace. How do we understand this language of enemies that we have in Sam 62 and in many of the Sam's?

Well the key point is this, we've got to remember that for David, the king who wrote this Sam, for David an enemy was someone who was trying to kill him.

Somebody who was trying to kill him. So he's not talking about a political rival, it's not like Sunak against Starmer, you know two political rivals trying to get a victory.

It's not like a difficult neighbor that you just can't get on with and it's not even somebody who's hurt you, hurt him in the past, you know who's just let him down, it's all much more serious than that.

[7 : 02] David's enemies wanted to kill him. And if that enemy stopped trying to kill him then he stopped being an enemy.

It's only an enemy when the threat is that real, when it's a life and death situation. That's what the language is referring to. Enemy is something that is trying to destroy you.

And that's why the Sam's can speak of longing for enemies to be defeated because that was the only hope of safety. For David part of that was to preserve his own life.

Like all of us, he didn't want to be killed. But for David this was also about preserving God's purposes because when you go back to the Old Testament, the people of Israel as a nation were chosen to be the ones through whom God's purposes would be accomplished and foreshadowed. And within that, David's family was chosen to be the royal line through which the Messiah was going to come. So that meant that in the Old Testament to destroy Israel, to destroy David and his family, that was not just to attack on them as a nation.

[8 : 16] That was an assault on the purposes of God. And when we see it in those terms, it can help us understand the language of enemies more.

It can also help us apply the language of enemies to our own lives. Because that's the difficult thing. You think, you know, how can I accept that? How can I really apply this to my life?

Can we use this kind of language? Well, the answer is yes, we can. But we have to do it in the light of the bigger picture of what the Bible is conveying.

We can use this language not because we are in war and not because there are people groups that we want destroyed. That's not what we want at all. But we can use this language because we know the reality of an opponent trying to destroy it.

So we're not in a geopolitical war. We're not in a civil war. The great posture of the Gospel is to be peacemakers.

[9 : 20] But every single one of us still knows what it's like to be in the crosshairs of an opponent trying to destroy us. And that's because this particular experience of David being under attack from

an enemy is a specific example of a bigger problem.

What David is talking about here is the specific example of a bigger problem. The bigger problem is the reality of sin and death.

And that enemy has not gone away. And it's so crucial to recognize this. Every conflict that you read about in the Old Testament, every situation of enmity that you read about in the Psalms, everything that is wrong with the world, everything that makes life rubbish, everything that causes suffering, pain and heartbreak.

Everything that is awful has the same source. It all comes from the reality of sin. So when we think about what sin is, you need to think of a big toxic poisonous loch that's just disgusting.

And it has a whole pile of streams coming out of it. And in David's experience in this Psalm, he was in danger of being engulfed by the stream of violence and war.

[10:44] But there's other streams. There's the stream of disease that attacks our bodies, where infections that are microscopic, we can't even see them. And yet they are powerful enough to kill us.

They want to destroy us. You see the stream of disasters. You've got a broken created order in the universe now. And at times that erupts and there's devastating effects.

There's the stream of injustice, cruelty, exploitation, neglect, all sorts of awful things. It's a stream that just leaves a trail of destruction in its wake.

So yes, we are so thankful that we live in a part of the world that at this period of time is free from war, but not for one second has the destructive power of sin given up its mission to get us.

And all of this highlights the devastating effect of sin. This left God's beautiful creation broken. Life is fragile. Life's cruel.

[11:44] It's dangerous. And death has become inescapable. And we're all caught up in that. It affects us all. The streams of sin's destruction flow over us.

And when you look at things like war and exploitation, you see that these streams don't just flow over the human race, sometimes they flow through human behavior as well.

And the impact is devastating. Life is now full of suffering and one day death will catch up with all of that.

Now, all of this points to one of the most important and relevant truths that the Bible teaches. And these are the big challenges that we have today.

I don't have much difficulty persuading people that the Bible is true. It's funny, years ago people used to, it was very much either on, I believe the Bible, I don't believe the Bible.

[12:47] It was very much like skeptic, this believer skeptic, da, da, da. You don't really get that so much now. Most people you talk about the Bible and they're like, oh yeah, that's okay. And people are quite respectful of it and they have an admiration for Christianity, for Jesus.

Most people don't really question whether or not the Bible is true. The problem is getting people to see that it's relevant.

That's the challenge that the church faces today. Well, I think maybe this word enemy, that word enemy, that might just be the key for us all to see how relevant the Gospel really is because it's pointing us to the fact that according to the Bible, death is an enemy.

That is one of the most fundamental truths of the Gospel and it's a truth that every one of us knows is true. When we see people's lives being lost in conflict and disaster around the world, when we're hit by the devastation of loss in our own family and friends, when we are confronted by the fragility of our own lives, we know that death is an enemy.

And at a distance, death might seem small, but when it comes close, we see that it's our biggest foe and we see that nothing is more relevant.

[14:15] Nothing is more urgent. And we must never forget that the connection between sin and death is unbreakable. Sin brings death. It is literally our mortal enemy.

And the key question you have to ask yourself is this. Faced with the reality of death, should you surrender?

Now, that might seem like a bit of a silly question. It's not silly at all. This is actually the question that the whole Gospel turns on. Should you surrender?

And the world around us, the culture we live in, the mindset of 2024 that doesn't have an enormous amount of interest in Jesus and certainly doesn't see the Gospel as particularly relevant, that culture, that mindset has only one answer to the question, should you surrender?

Yes. The culture around us says surrender. You have to because there's no alternative. And that's why the highest hope that the mindset around us can offer you is to say, try and surrender on the best possible terms.

[15:26] So you've got to surrender to death, but make it as late as possible. So we all hope our lives will be long. Surrender to death, but make sure you enjoy yourself along the way.

So we want to make our lives happy for ourselves and for the people that we love. And more and more today, people will say, surrender to death, but set the time yourself and the method yourself. And all of that ties into the emphasis on assisted dying that we're seeing arising in our Western culture today. When the reality of death confronts us, the culture around us is saying surrender. And it even speaks as though the enemy you are surrendering to is a friend. Isn't that true? That's how people speak.

And what I want to press home to you today and what we've all got to understand is that as the brutal enemy of death stalks us, as we face the pain of loss, as we experience the heartbreak of death, of miscarriage, of children struck by awful diseases, of young lives destroyed by addiction, of cancer, mercilessly taking people, of terrible accidents and disasters, of old age causing our bodies to fall apart as the enemy of death wrecks everything.

[16:57] The Gospel says, do not surrender. That's the message of the Gospel in the face of death God is saying, do not surrender.

And we feel like saying, but we're powerless. And that's true. In the face of death we are, but God says, I know you're powerless, but you're not on your own.

We're not on our own because we have a king.

And that's the second key word in the Psalm that points us to Jesus. As we said, the Psalm was written by David. David was the model Old Testament king. It's easy to remember his date. He lived more or less around 1000 BC. It was about 1000 years before Jesus 3000 years ago from now. He was the king against all other kings, against whom all the later kings were measured.

[18:01] He was the model in the Old Testament. But his reign was not straightforward. He frequently faced attacks from foreign enemies, from within his own country, even at times from within his own family.

And because of all that turmoil he faced in this Psalm and in others, he seeks protection. He was fragile. He was frequently in danger. And so he sought preservation.

And so you get that language in this Psalm. But at the same time, this language, this Psalm speaks about the king in the language of forever.

May he be enthroned forever. May his years endure to all generations. I will ever sing praises.

And so you've got this sort of strange balance here with, you know, David is talking about how fragile he is, how he's in danger from his enemies.

[19:01] And so he's so conscious of the shortness and fragility of his own life. And yet you've got the language of forever in reference to the king. Now, if that was only about David, it wouldn't really make sense because you're talking about someone whose life is going to end.

It clearly did historically end. And yet it's speaking about forever. And if it's just about David, it doesn't really make sense. But it's not just about David. It's also about Jesus.

And these connections between King David and King Jesus are very, very important in terms of the Bible's message. As we said, David in the Old Testament was the model king.

But even David wasn't perfect and his own life fell into sin. His reign did come to an end. The enemy of death caught him eventually too.

But all of David's life served like everything else in the Old Testament as a shadow of what was going to come. And within David's own life, he was given a promise, a key covenant promise from God that his descendant would reign forever.

[20:09] That's stated in 2 Samuel 7. God says to David, when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your father, I'll raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body.

I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house from my name. I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. And all of this is feeding in to the promises that run right through the Old Testament, that God's king is coming.

The term used for that in Hebrew is the Messiah. The Greek version of that is the word Christ, God's chosen anointed king coming to save God's people.

And Jesus comes as the fulfillment of those promises. These promises made in the Old Testament, these promises made to King David, Jesus comes to fulfill those. In fact, the very first thing you learn about Jesus in the New Testament, the very first thing that Matthew's gospel tells you is that Jesus is the son of David.

And that's connecting all these promises together. In other words, all the verses in these Psalms find their chorus in the coming of Jesus.

[21 : 19] But what difference does that make? And why is that important for us? When we think of royalty, when we think of kings and queens, often we think in terms of a king or a queen reigning.

So we'll think of the splendor of a palace and a crown and a throne and all that kind of stuff. But you don't have to think about it for long to recognize that that's not what makes a king impressive.

It's not someone's crown or throne or palace that makes them impressive. When Queen Elizabeth died, what did people say about her?

People say she was amazing because she reigned. No, I don't think I heard anybody say that. But again and again and again, I heard people say Elizabeth was amazing because she served.

She served her country for so long. And that, of course, is the mark of good leadership. The greatest leaders in history stand out because they served the people that they were responsible for.

[22 : 23] But that's not just a historical principle. It's actually, most of all, a biblical principle in the Bible to lead is to serve. But biblically, serving involves more than just fulfilling your obligations.

Biblically serving also involves being willing to suffer. So you have this pattern to be a king is to serve. So to be a king, you need to be a servant. To serve is to be ready to suffer.

And you have this pattern, being a king means that you serve. Being ready to serve means being ready to suffer.

And at times, David showed that. But the place where you find that most of all is in Jesus.

And it's hinted at in this Psalm. Here in the verses towards the end, David speaks about making vows. You can see it there. For you, God, have heard my vows. You've given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

[23 : 24] Prolong the life of your king. May his years endure to all generations. May he be thrown forever before God. A point of steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him. So I'll ever sing praises to your name as I perform my vows day after day.

You've got the language of vows. Verse five, verse eight. At a basic level, that speaks of duty. Speaks of service. As David pleads for protection, he also renews his commitment to fulfill his obligations.

But there's something deeper behind this language of vows. It doesn't just speak of fulfilling duty. It also is speaking the language of sacrifice.

That's because in the Old Testament, to make a vow meant that you were making a commitment in the sight of God. As you did that, it was accompanied by a sacrifice.

Here's Leviticus 22, 21 telling us about it when anyone offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord to fulfill a vow, or as a free will offering from the herd or from the flock to be accepted, it must be perfect with no blemish in it.

[24 : 27] And so David, as he pleads for God's protection, as he renews his commitment to serve, that vow is accompanied by sacrifice.

And if God will save him, he'll continue on serving day after day. All of this is pointing us to Jesus because Jesus is strikingly similar, but magnificently different.

Jesus is king, so he's going to serve. Jesus will perform his vows. He'll fulfill his obligations. But in order to fulfill those obligations, Jesus is not going to bring a sacrifice.

He's going to be the sacrifice. Jesus is God's ultimate king, and God's king is going to serve.

God's king is going to suffer. God's king is going to die. And that's why Jesus did not come to sit in a throne.

[25 : 40] He came to hang on a cross. But as he does all that, he's not seeking the same thing as David. He's not seeking to escape death.

Jesus is coming to defeat death. He's coming to do what David and what none of us could ever do.

And that is why the Gospel is saying, do not surrender because with Jesus we're going to win.

The ultimate enemy for David and for us is death. And Jesus has come to conquer that enemy.

And that's why these words enemy and king are so important because the word enemy is pointing us to the single biggest problem that every single one of us faces.

[26 : 43] The problem that ruins everything. The word king captures the single greatest person, the one who has come to put everything right. And the incredible truth of the Gospel is that saving us from the enemy of death meant Jesus the king dying in our place.

So in the verse, David says, prolong my life. In the chorus says, Jesus sings, I will give my life. In the verse, David sings, crush them, save me. In the chorus, Jesus sings, crush me, save them. Jesus is the ultimate king, the ultimate servant, the ultimate sufferer. And he's done it all to conquer the ultimate enemy.

And I want to just conclude with this question. Does your life have this chorus? You think about the chorus of a song, it's this thing that you can keep coming back to.

[28 : 05] And you know, a good song will have verses that will take you through highs and lows. Sometimes verses might be positive. They might have their major chords.

Sometimes verses will have minor chords. But a good song will keep taking you back to a chorus that is full of joy, a chorus that renews you and refreshes you and that thrills your heart.

And it's always the chorus that you want to get back to in a song. Does your life have this chorus? Because you know, as Christians, if we are trusting in Jesus, when you lose somebody you love who's trusting in Jesus, when you miss them so much, you can sing this chorus.

You can sing the chorus, the fact that Jesus has risen and that the people we love and miss so much are safe with him and we're going to be with them again too.

[29 : 21] And as we face the fragility of our own life and we feel overwhelmed, we can sing this chorus. We can come back to Jesus and know that we are safe in him, that death has lost all of its power.

The reality of Jesus' death and resurrection is the chorus that we can keep on coming back to you. Do you have this chorus in your life?

Do you have Jesus? Do you have the chorus that not even death can silence? Oh, that is why knowing Jesus is so amazing.

That's why we want this for you more than anything else, that you find just that peace and security in him. And if you're not sure where you stand before the Lord today, if you're thinking about it and anxious about it, remember, you know, do you know the place to go?

If you want to know about coming to Jesus, the job of the sermon is to show you how much you need him. But if you want to know how you do it, don't go to the sermon.

[30 : 33] Go to the children's talk. So you just said, come. And we come with all the simplicity of a child. And just say, Lord Jesus, I just want to come to you.

Please save me. That is all you have to be. Amen. Thank you.