

hearts like leaky buckets. As you go through life, the trials of each day make the love and compassion in your heart slowly leak away. You can feel that, can't you? Every day, your heart is slowly being drained. And what happens when two leaky buckets go head to head in a marriage? Struggles come. A leaky bucket can't fill up another leaky bucket. You need someone else to constantly fill you up. I think you know the only One who can—Jesus!

It sounds almost wrong to say it, but your spouse can't be your refuge and your hiding place. Because he or she is just as weak and leaky and needy as you. When we expect others to fill us up like only Jesus can, we end up making such high expectations that they will never be able to reach them. If your bucket is empty, if you haven't found your hiding place in Jesus, then you will always be concerned about others loving you. But if God is your hiding place, if Jesus is the One filling you up, then you will be concerned about showing love to others. The greatest gift you can give to the people you love is to find your strength in Jesus, not in them, so that you have love to share with others.

So let God fill you up! Here's how our psalm ends. *"He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."* Valentine messages are always short and sweet, right? Here are three valentines from your God today. First, *"He will call upon me, and I will answer him."* Today, God might say, "Whenever you call me, I'll be there." That's God's promise! We pray, and he answers. What's more encouraging than that?

Here's another valentine: *"I will be with him in trouble."* Today, God might say, "Always by your side!" God doesn't just know what we're going through. He doesn't just relate to our troubles. He's here. Right now. With you. Wow! Here's one more: *"With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."* Picture a candy heart that says, "Yours forever!" What more do you need? With your God, you don't have to ever hide who you are. With your God, you don't have to ever be ashamed. With your God, you don't have to ever be afraid. With your God, you can feel comfortable and content and safe and loved. God's your hiding place. Single or married, kids or no kids. You've got a hiding place.

It's amazing what a heart filled with God's love can do. When Corrie ten Boom's father, Casper, was arrested, the Nazis offered to let him go, because he was so old. Do you know what he said? "If I go home today, tomorrow I will open my door to anyone who asks for help." Just before Corrie ten Boom's sister Betsie died in a concentration camp, she said, "There is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still." How could they say those things? There were 1000 against them on one side and 10,000 on the other, but they weren't afraid! They had a hiding place. Even better than the one they built in their house. They had a hiding place, with someone even more loving than their own loving family. As you think about love today, remember this: Jesus is my hiding place!

Psalm 91:1-16
Pastor Nathan Nass

Lent 1
February 14, 2016

¹He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." ³Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. ⁵You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. ⁷A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ⁸You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. ⁹If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—¹⁰then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. ¹¹For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; ¹²they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. ¹³You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ¹⁴"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. ¹⁵He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. ¹⁶With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

My Hiding Place

Love is in the air. Can you feel it? On Valentine's Day we think about how special love is. About how all we really need is love...and flowers and chocolates and special dinners and nice presents and cards and poems and balloons...but mostly love. Actually, Valentine's Day shows us how much confusion there is about love, doesn't it? What's love? Everyone's looking for true love. Not many people seem to find it. People fall in love. Then people fall out of love. Love conquers all except when it breaks our hearts. Everyone's looking for love, but I think there's a little confusion about love.

So I want to tell you a story about real love. Have you heard of the book, "The Hiding Place?" It tells the story of a Dutch family—the ten Booms—during World War II. When the Nazis took over Holland and begin persecuting the Jews, Casper ten Boom and his family decided to do all they could to save them. They built a secret room in their house—the "hiding place"—and risked their lives to hide Jews there. Over the course of the war, over 800 Jews were saved through this one family and their "hiding place." Now that's love, isn't it? To love is to sacrifice for others at all costs. To be loved is to have a hiding place.

I think that's what we're looking for in life. We're looking for a hiding place. When a people look for love, they're looking for a person who can provide them with a safe place in the middle of our cruel world. We're looking for a person with whom we don't have to hide who we are. We're looking for a person with whom we don't have to be ashamed. With whom we feel comfortable and content and safe and protected and loved. Do you see what I mean? Each one of us needs to be loved. We need a hiding place.

Have you found that? Have you found your hiding place? As much as our world talks about love, we live in a loveless world. A world full of people out to get what they want. A world of people who view love as a means to an end. I bet just about every person here has had a broken heart. And yet, we keep searching. We keep hoping. Because, we still need to be loved, right? We want to be loved. We each need a hiding place.

So I want you to listen to what God offers you. *“He who 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.’”* Did you catch it? God wants to be your hiding place—your shelter, your shadow, your refuge, your fortress. When we walk down the street together, my son Isaiah can fit inside my shadow. Sometimes he chases it or tries to step on it. This is you and God. You fit in his shadow. If you are looking for a place where you can know you are safe and loved, you can find that in God. God’s your hiding place.

The problem is we’re often not content with that. My son Isaiah is at the stage where he’s started saying things like, “I know, Dad. I know that already. You don’t have to say that.” That’s maybe what a part of you is objecting. “I know, Pastor. The answer is God. Jesus loves me. Sure, I get it. That’s what you always say!” But God doesn’t want you to get it. He wants you to believe it. He wants you to walk out of here convinced that since God’s your hiding place, you have all the love you need!

So today God pulls out all the stops. He uses all the most beautiful pictures of love he can come up with. Like, *“he will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.”* We got to sing “On Eagles’ Wings” today. Like a mother eagle covers her chicks with her wings, God covers us. That means I’m a chick. I don’t say that very often! But it’s true, isn’t it? You’re a chick too. And in our big, bad world, little chicks don’t stand a chance, unless their mother’s wings protect them. God’s wings cover you. That’s love! Where can you find that, other than in God?

Here’s what that means for you: *“You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.”* If God really has his wings over me, what can harm me? In ancient times, the two biggest worries were war and sickness. Can you imagine living in a world without medicine or the U.S. Army? And yet the author of this psalm wasn’t afraid. A thousand may fall. Ten thousand may fall. “I will not fear!” Can you say that?

What’s it for you? What fear keeps you up at night? Zika? Terrorism? Your kids? Donald Trump? You don’t have to be afraid. It doesn’t matter how many there are. It doesn’t matter how stacked the odds are against us. Do you remember who is on your side? Corrie ten Boom and her little family stood up to Hitler and millions of Nazis soldiers. Yet, God still allowed them to save the lives of many people. *“If God is for us, who can stand against us?”* (Romans 8:31). *“He will cover you with his feathers.”* You don’t have to fear the terror of the night!

Because, *“if you make the Most High your dwelling...then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.”* The word for “dwelling” is the word for an animal’s hidden lair. Do you ever wonder where the animals go on a cold, snowy day? They have a hiding place, right? A place where it’s warm and dry and safe. That’s what God wants to be for you. Your hiding place. No matter what your relationships in life are like, you already have a place where you can go when life is cold or when there’s a storm or when the people threaten you. It’s Jesus. You are safe with him! To be loved is to have a hiding place.

I told you about this Dutch family and their hiding place. It’s estimated that 800 Jews safely passed through their house. But it didn’t end well. In 1944, the Nazis raided their home. The whole family was arrested. The courageous father—84-year-old Casper ten Boom—died just ten days later in prison. Others died in concentration camps. But do you know what the Nazis never found? They never found the hiding place. The six Jews in the hiding place survived, even as the whole family that protected them was carried away. That’s love! They were willing to sacrifice at all costs to give others a hiding place.

Isn’t that what Jesus did for us? Our sin and our guilt were hunting us down. But what did God do? He decided to hide us in his love and his forgiveness, while he allowed his Son Jesus to be carried off to die. I know you’ve heard that a lot, but I hope that still amazes you. Jesus was taken off to die, so that you are forgiven. He was taken off to die, so that you are safe. To love is to sacrifice at all costs—like Jesus did. To be loved is to have a hiding place—like Jesus has given us. *“If you make the Most High your dwelling...then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.”* It’s good to have a hiding place.

It gets better! *“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”* The Bible never talks about each person having one guardian angel. It’s better! There are *many* guardian angels that surround God’s people at all times. There are angels around your child, even when you’re not there. There are angels at your parent’s side, even when you’re not. In fact, even when you are by their side, there are still angels there, because let’s face it, they can do a whole lot better job than we can! God’s angels carry you.

It all sounds great, doesn’t it? Except what about all the times when problems *do* come near to us? Before we complain, let’s think about how life works. We have 99 good days, but what day do we remember? The one bad one. God’s angel armies protect us from accidents and germs and disaster, and yet what do we focus on? Whatever trouble God permits in our lives. Wouldn’t it be amazing if we could see the angels in action? Just stop and imagine what God and his angels are doing behind the scenes every single day for you and me. And when the troubles do come, I like what Corrie ten Boom used to say, even after all that she and her family endured: “God doesn’t have problems; he has plans.”

So on Valentine’s Day, here’s the best thing you can do for whatever relationships you have in your life—make God your hiding place. I once heard someone describe our