**responding to a clear and present danger**

(Psalm 119:145-152)

**Psalm 119:145–152**-----145 I cry out with *my* whole heart; Hear me, O Lord! I will keep Your statutes. 146 I cry out to You; Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies. 147 I rise before the dawning of the morning, And cry for help; I hope in Your word. 148 My eyes are awake through the *night* watches, That I may meditate on Your word. 149 Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; O Lord, revive me according to Your justice. 150 They draw near who follow after wickedness; They are far from Your law. 151 You *are* near, O Lord, And all Your commandments *are* truth. 152 Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.

In an interview on the TV show *Inside Edition,* Anne Hjelle [yell-aye] shared the following words about her horrible ordeal: **“Once he started clamping down, I remember thinking, ‘This is it. I'm going to die.’”**

Riding her mountain bike in a Southern California wilderness park, Anne was ferociously attacked by a mountain lion. Thrown off her bike, Anne immediately knew what was happening. She said the lion **"was going for my neck, and his goal, as it would be with any type of prey, was to break my neck and paralyze me."**

Fortunately, Anne's friend Debbie Nichols, who had been riding with her, came to the rescue. Seeing Anne being dragged into the brush, Debbie began a tug-of-war with the lion. Debbie pulled on Anne's legs, while the lion held Anne's face and head in his jaws. Two other bikers came by and tried to scare the animal away. Finally, the lion let go, backing off his prey.

Anne was airlifted to a hospital. Rangers hunting the lion found the partially eaten body of Mike Reynolds, another biker. The animal had made the kill before attacking Anne. The Rangers found the lion hovering near the body and killed it.

Face scarred, facing reconstructive surgery, Anne tells what went on inside her in that terrifying ordeal as she grappled with the lion for her life: **"I was terrified. My first words, as soon as he grabbed on to me were *'Jesus help me.'* It was a conscious decision; I'm in serious trouble and I need help."**

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When we hear of a life-threatening ordeal like this one, most of us can pause and thank God that the chances of a mountain lion chomping down on our heads like this are very, very small since (1) we don’t live near mountain lions and (2) none of us are probably planning to ride bikes in a Southern California wilderness park anytime soon.

However, even though none of us may have to face a life-threatening situation involving a mountain lion, that doesn’t mean that we get a free pass from dangers or trouble. Just as that lion came out of nowhere and attacked Anne Hjelle, some**one** or some circumstance just as awful can come into our lives and threaten to do us in or to harm us. (For the Psalmist in our text, it was evil people that were ganging up on him.) So, what are we to do (and how are we to respond) when we find our lives threatened in some way or by somebody? That is what I would like to speak to you about for a few minutes this morning before we share the Lord’s Supper.

**Title:** Responding to a Clear and Present Danger

(Prayer)

It was reformed theologian J.I. Packer who correctly said: “Opposition is a fact: the Christian who is not conscious of being opposed had better watch himself for he is in danger.”

* Jesus said: “because you are not of the world … **the world** hates you” (John 15:19).
* Paul said: “there are many **adversaries**” (1 Cor 16:9) and spoke of “**enemies** of the cross of Christ” (Phil 3:18).
* Peter spoke of: “your **adversary**, the devil” (1 Pet 5:8) who seeks Christians out to devour them.
* Paul said that we aren’t wrestling against people but against “against **principalities**” and other evil spirits who do Satan’s bidding.
* And the apostle John told us: “do not marvel … if **the world** hates you” (1 John 3:13).

In our text this morning, the Psalmist put it this way (in v. 150):

Those who are **eager to do wrong** draw near; they are **far from your law** (Psalm 119:150---NET).

The Psalmist was in danger because evil people wanted to hurt him in some way (and maybe kill him). Both Jesus and the apostle Paul faced threats of both physical harm and even death as they walked this earth.

Now, our threats may be more *spiritual* in nature, but the attitude of society without God has not changed in 2000 years. The world still hates you and I and we shouldn’t be shocked at this.

So what did the Psalmist do? He did the same thing that Anne Hjelle did when she was attacked. Look at…

v. 145: I **cry** out with *my* whole heart… Fervent prayer

v. 146: I **cry** out to You; Save me… Prayer for God’s rescue

v. 147: I … **cry** for help; I hope in Your word. Prayer for God’s help

When circumstances or people come against us we must…

**1. Be faithful to the word and fervent in prayer,
trusting in God’s help for the helpless**

We saw the Psalmist’s fervent prayer, but notice what he is saying as well:

v. 145: Hear me, O Lord! **I will keep Your statutes**.

v. 146: Save me, and **I will keep Your testimonies**.

v. 147: **I hope in Your word**. (or, promises)

v. 148: My eyes are awake … **that** **I meditate in Your word**.

Notice the importance in this Psalm of both prayer and the word!

One time a man who was witnessing to and teaching people who had moved to Italy to be house servants was a passenger in a car on the way to the next city when all of a sudden he heard a noise in the engine and then the entire car filled with smoke. He thought this might be the end of his life since they were on the mountains outside of Rome and the only thing between him and the valley below was, what he called, “a stumpy guardrail.” Somehow, the driver was able to get control of the car and to bring it to a stop nestled against the guardrail.

When he called his family back in Montana later that day to tell them what happened, his 14-year-old son, Royce said:

"I couldn't get to sleep, Dad. I had this terrible feeling that you were in some kind of trouble, and I thought, ‘What would I do if something happened to my dad?’ I looked at the clock in the bedroom and it was already past 2 a.m. I got out of bed and prayed for your protection. Then I felt everything was OK, and I was able to sleep."

As soon as the son said “2 AM” the dad calculated the time change between Montana and Italy and realized that his son was praying for him at the very moment he was nearly killed—9 AM Italy time.

As the father was faithful to God’s word in Italy, the son’s fervent prayers in Montana were heard by faithful God:

149 Hear my voice according to Your **lovingkindness**; [hesed---loyal love, or, help for the helpless] O Lord, revive [or, preserve] me according to Your justice.

When circumstances or people come against us we must…

1. Be faithful to the word and fervent in prayer,
trusting in God’s help for the helpless

**2. Be thankful that God is near and
always faithful to what He has promised**

151 You ***are* near**, O Lord, And all Your commandments ***are* truth**. [or, reliable]
152 Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.

The Psalmist just said in verse 150 that his enemies were near. But he gets the correct view of the entire matter when he sees that **God is near** and that the promises of His word are reliable. He knows God’s promises were made a long time before He was born (v. 152), but he also knows that they are eternally reliable---forever!

Do you know what nullifies our fears when trouble is near (or even upon us)? Remembering that God is near and that His promises are good forever!

(Have men come forward for Lord’s Supper)

In one of the verses of his powerful hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” Martin Luther wrote:

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing.
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God’s own choosing.
Dost ask who this may be?
Christ Jesus it is He.
Lord Sabaoth is His name,
From age to age the same.
And He must win the battle.

Context: The Psalmist is fervently seeking God (I cry out---3X; I rise/am awake) to help/rescue/protect from evil people who seek to harm him in some way.

Ross: When threatened by those who are far from God, the faithful may pray with confidence for [God’s] deliverance because the Lord is near them and His promises are sure.

**Psalm 119:145–152**-----the Psalmist cries out fervently to God for rescue, help, and protection, hoping (trusting?) in His word, loyal love, and nearness

145 I cry out

with *my* whole heart; heartfelt prayer (cry---3X)

Hear me, O Lord!

I will keep Your statutes. prayer with a promise

146 I cry out

to You; well-directed prayer

Save me, he needs God’s rescue in some way

and I will keep Your testimonies. prayer with a promise

147 I rise before the dawning of the morning, prayer as a priority

And cry for help; he needs God’s help in some way

 (third time he “cries” out to God)

 I hope in Your word. (see v. 152) praying according to God’s promises

148 My eyes are awake through the *night* watches, (gaining hope from God’s word

 That I may meditate on Your word. begins with pondering and

 understanding it)

149 Hear my voice (2nd time he asks God to hear him)

according to Your lovingkindness;

O Lord, revive me according to Your justice. -------------------possibly, “preserve me”

 he needs God to revive/preserve him

**150 They draw near who follow after wickedness;**

 he needs God to protect him

 They are far from Your law.

151 You *are* near, O Lord, Ross: = divine intervention (not location)

 And all Your commandments *are* truth. ------------Reliability of the word

152 Concerning Your testimonies,

 I have known of old that You have founded them forever.