

A Rock on a Muddy Street

by Carter Conlon

This sermon is a powerful message based on Psalms 40, emphasizing the importance of abiding in God's presence and finding strength in Him amidst life's challenges. It highlights the transformative power of worship and the impact of having a song of praise in our hearts, even in the midst of difficulties. The speaker encourages listeners to trust in God, seek His help, and not delay in coming to Him for deliverance and salvation.

Scripture: Psalms 40:1, Psalms 91:1, John 15:4, Proverbs 3:5, Psalms 91:3, Psalms 57:1, Psalms 40:11

Topics: "Abiding in God's Presence", "Transformative Power of Worship"

Description

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Transcript

I want to read to you from Psalm 40. We're going to start there, and then I'm going to sing a song for you tonight, a song that became very special to me over time, and I wish, I honestly wish I had recorded it on the CD Quiet Times. I had an opportunity to do that, but we were too far into the project to actually record this song.

But Psalm 40, the Psalm of King David. David said, I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.

And He's put a new song in my mouth, praise to our God, and many will see it, and fear, and will trust in the Lord. I want to speak to you about a rock on a muddy street. Father, I thank you, God, for the anointing of heaven.

God Almighty, it is only your anointing that makes the difference. Otherwise, it's just words. But it's your presence.

It's the anointing of your Holy Spirit. It's you working in conjunction with human vessels that make such a difference in this world. God, tonight, I'm asking in Jesus' name that you would do something profound in

somebody's life, God.

Somebody who's at home listening, and maybe they are stuck in a muddy street, and a place where they feel like they're sinking. They don't know how they're ever going to get out of where they are. But Lord, you're come to them tonight, God, and you're willing to lift them up as you did with King David, and you set up upon a rock.

You put solidness under his feet. You put a new song in his heart, and He said it's a song that people could see, not just hear. God, thank you that your song is deeper than words that you place within each of our hearts, God.

It is an amazing song of confidence and of trust in you, and how we need that song in this generation now, as so many people are beginning to sink under the weight of sin. God Almighty, be merciful to those who want to know you, and be merciful to those who do know you as Lord and Savior. It was early in the 2000s.

I was coming in from New Jersey on the train, and I would come in on the train from New Jersey where we lived, and I would get off at Penn Station, and I would walk from, I think it's 34th all the way to 52nd. And I used to enjoy the walk, actually. I found it refreshing in the morning.

This particular day was kind of a gray heavy day, and it was a gloomy day, and it was a more nasty than normal day in New York City. And New York City can have some pretty nasty days. I'm talking about the people.

I'm not talking about the weather. I'm talking about the people. It can be a hard day.

And I remember coming out of Penn Station and coming down to Broadway where I was walking up towards 52nd, and it was just one of those days where everybody seems to be cursing at somebody all around me. They're on their cell phones, and people are not having conversations. They're actually yelling at people.

Somebody's yelling at them so loud you can actually hear it on their phone, and they're yelling back at them. And some of it's business related. Some of it's relationship related.

Some of it's just anger, just on steroids. They don't know how else to deal with life other than scream and shout. And people were kind of pushing each other in the street.

You had to be careful when you were walking because people weren't moving for you, and they would very gladly give you a shoulder if you got in their way. And I was looking, and the streets were a little bit dirty that day, and the weather was gray, and everybody's cursing, and suddenly the joy of the Lord hit my heart. It just hit my heart, and I said, God, thank you that I'm in this world, but I'm not of it.

I'm not a partaker of the spirit of this city, the spirit of this world, because you have lifted me out of where these people are sinking on this muddy street. I'm not sinking. You've given me a rock.

You've given me a place to stand. You've given me a song. You've given me a hope, a confidence, and endurance.

You've given me a joy that this world can't take away. It doesn't matter how nasty the day is. There's nothing in this world that can take that joy out of my heart.

And I started to sing. I don't know. There's just the joy of the Lord hit me, and it just dawned on me I'm not part of this.

I live in a whole different place. I have hope for the future. I have forgiveness in my heart.

I have a message of redemption. I have a reason to be in the city and be heading down to the church. I have a permitting that's going to happen tonight.

My heart was just overflowing. And out of that overflowing presence of God in my heart, I began to sing. And you know, I thought, well, if they can curse, I can sing.

It's New York. You can do whatever you want in New York. You can be totally nuts, and you can just get along quite fine in the city.

And so I just began to sing. I began to sing out loud. I wasn't singing softly.

I was singing out loud. And by the time I got to the church, I had two verses and a chorus to a brand new song called In the Presence of God. And I want to share it with you tonight.

I've got a backup group here because I'm getting old and creaky in my voice, and I need help. And they've been practicing a little bit. But it's a song called In the Presence of God.

And I think it's based on Psalm 40. I was probably, I can't say for sure, but probably thinking about some of these words as I began to sing. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Let's do it now. I walk in the presence of God, where the saints all before me have trod.

Day to day by victory greeted, here I'll never be defeated, as I walk in the presence of God. In the presence of God, in the presence of God, I walk in the presence of God. Where I share the joys of heaven, as I give my Jesus reverence, and I walk in the presence of God.

Where I share the joys of heaven, as I give my Jesus reverence, and I walk in the presence of God. I walk in the presence of God. Think about it.

Freed from sin, clean and righteous, not flawed. Day to day, my blessed Savior fills my life with boundless favor, as I walk in the presence of God. In the presence of God, in the presence of God, I walk in the presence of God.

Where I share the joys of heaven, as I give my Jesus reverence, and I walk in the presence of God. Where I share the joys of heaven, as I give my Jesus reverence, and I walk in the presence of God. Let's sing the chorus together now if you can.

In the presence of God, in the presence of God, I walk in the presence of God. Where I share the joys of heaven, as I give my Jesus reverence, and I walk in the presence of God. Where I share the joys of heaven, as I give my Jesus reverence, and I walk in the presence of God.

Praise God. Thank you so much guys. Thank you.

I can't help but wonder how many people saw my song that day. As I'm passing by on the street and they're all bummed out going to work and hating somebody or something or somewhere, feeling like what is life all about, angered by the sinking feeling that's all around them. Suddenly this guy goes by and he's

singing, as I share the joys of heaven, as I give my Jesus reverence.

I wonder when I get to eternity if I pass some people that started thinking about God because I have a song that this world knows nothing about and was not ashamed to sing it in public. Just as they're not ashamed to curse in public, I'm not ashamed of Christ. Anywhere I go, I'm not ashamed to sing His name.

I'm not ashamed to mention His name. And you know, it's so important now in this present age as it accelerates downward and it's pulled. We're living in a world today that is almost like a magnet.

It's pulling people down into a mire. It's pulling them down into a place where they're not going to be able to get out. Can't change their way of thinking, are filled with rage.

We have a lot of college students like that even in our present day that can't even tolerate a contrary opinion maybe to their own, and they're being pulled down into this mire. It's imperative now that you and I who know Christ, we have to find and abide in the strength that He freely offers to all of us, because He offers us strength. If we want the strength, it can be yours.

You are listening online tonight. There's a strength available to you in God that can be yours if you'll reach out tonight and ask for it. Now, Jesus said in John chapter 15 in verses 4 and 7, He said, Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

In other words, it's the strength that you need to get through the time that we are now facing comes from an inward knowledge and relationship with the Son of God, Jesus Christ, comes by the indwelling of God's truth in our inward parts and the empowerment of God's Holy Spirit within us, to lift us out of the mire of this world and set our feet in a place, a pathway that is solid, that we know where we're going, we know who we are, we know how we're going to get there, and we have a confidence that even though the systems around us in this world are beginning to shake, and as David the Psalmist once said, even if the seas begin to roar and the mountains shake and fall into the midst of the sea, I'm not going to be moved by these things. My heart is fixed, David said, trusting in the Lord. I have this inner trust in God.

David had learned what it meant to abide in God, and in this generation we need to learn it too as well. And Jesus gives a promise in John chapter 15 verse 7, He said, If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it will be done for you. If you have embraced the Word of God, if you have turned to the Word of God as your source of life, as your worldview as it is, as your value system, we're going to see promises in the Word of God.

And He said, as you embrace these promises, as you embrace what your life is supposed to be in Christ, I'm telling you, Jesus said, you can ask for what you see and I'll give it to you. Phenomenal. I mean, He spoke that.

The God who cannot lie tells you and tells me that if I see something maybe that's outside of my reach at this present time, maybe it's a piece that I don't yet have, maybe it's a confidence in God that is not mine, but if His words are in me, I can ask and He said He will give it to me and He'll not withhold it from me. You know, the question arises, how do I abide in Christ? What does that really mean? What does it look like? The easiest answer I can give you is found in Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 5. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. You can't trust in God till you know who He is and you know what He says.

Until you've spent some time, at least some time in His Word, you begin to understand His heart, His promises, He tells us He's not going to leave us or forsake us. He tells us that He's come to give us life and give us life more abundantly. He tells us that no weapon formed against us can prosper and that every tongue that rises against us in judgment we can condemn.

He tells us this is our heritage. He tells us in the Word of God that He gives us a cleanness through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the devil can't get through that sacrifice to accuse us of wrongdoing or failure or something we may have not done or in the past or have yet to fully embrace for the future. Trust in Him with all your heart.

Trust in God. Don't trust in the things of this world. Don't let your trust be in anything else and lean not on your own understanding.

You know, when you get in a crisis, especially young people that are here today or tonight and those that are listening online, the tendency is to try to figure it out yourself. Really what the writer of Proverbs is saying, don't try to figure it out. Go back to what God's Word says about your circumstance or your situation.

Don't lean on your own understanding. Don't try to figure out how you're going to get through this on your own separate from what God promises you. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.

We pray that. We pray together. There's a group of us every from Tuesday to Friday and almost every time we pray, at the end of our prayer, we pray this prayer, God, help us to abide in you today.

Help us to be aware of your presence in our lives. Help us, oh God, in all of our ways to acknowledge you, in all of our ways to stop and say, God, is this what you want me to do? In all of our ways to let you begin to lead us and guide us, and you promise that you will direct our paths. There's great, great promises in the Word of God to those who choose to abide in Christ.

Look at Psalm 91, if you will. It'll be on the screen behind me, but for those that have Bibles, you may want to turn there as well. Psalm 91, this is the psalm which says, dwells in the secret place of the Most High.

That's where I was over 10 years ago on Broadway, that particular morning. I was abiding in the secret place of the Most High. Most of the people on the streets don't know anything about that place, that place that's found in God, that place of strength, stability, hope, joy, that place that produces a song that this world can't produce, that place that no matter what's going on around us at this time, it's not affecting us because we have the presence of God inside of our lives.

We have God's promises radiating through our hearts. He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will save the Lord.

He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him I will trust. Isn't it wonderful to be able to get to that place in life? It's a little harder when you're younger, I think sometimes, but eventually we get there. We just say, God, you have never failed me and you will never fail me.

I have found you to be a faithful friend. I have found it to be true. As David the psalmist once said, I've been young and now I'm old, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken or a seed begging bread.

God, I have seen your blessing on people all over the world. I've seen your blessing on kids living on park benches who have turned to you. I've seen the blessing of heaven come down upon them.

I trust you, Lord. I trust you, God. No matter what happens around me, no matter what this world tries to impose upon me or take away from me, my trust is not in this world, which will soon one day pass away.

My trust is in the living and eternal God who can never pass away. The living and eternal God who sent His Son to a cross to pay the price for my sin, to bring me back into a living relationship with Him. The living and eternal God who says, I will never fail you, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.

The eternal God that said, I came to give you life and to give it to you more abundantly. The eternal God that promises that in Christ, I'm a new creation. The old things in my life lose their hold.

They pass away and behold, all things become new. The God that puts it in my heart to believe that every day when I get up, there's a new journey ahead of me. There's some new thing that God's going to do inside of my heart and inside of my life.

And the beauty of it all, it never ends. It never finishes. You never get to an age where God says, well, you're old now, I'm not going to work in your life anymore.

He keeps working till we draw our last breath, our last physical breath on this earth, and then He keeps working even after that to us to be absent from the body, we're going to be suddenly in the presence of the Lord. Oh, we will be so thankful we didn't cast away our confidence in Him. We'll be so thankful we didn't put our song in a satchel somewhere and say, I'm going to save it for church.

We'll be so thankful we chose to sing it in the morning. We chose to sing it at night. We chose to sing it when all hell seems to be breaking out around us.

We said, God, must be time for the band, must be time for a song. The devil is on my case from every side. So I'm just going to bring out, I'm going to bring out, even if it's imaginary instruments, it doesn't matter.

I'm going to bring out the whole band of heaven and I'm going to worship right now. I'm going to worship because God has given me a song, and that song can be seen before it's heard. That song is a visible song.

It's not just lyrics. It's not just music on a sheet. It's produced from the entirety of our being, by the presence of God, by the power of God.

Young people, don't be sold short on this song. Don't be sold short. Don't give in to the song of this world.

Oh my, oh me, oh how, oh where, oh why, oh I've got the blues again today. Don't give in to that song. He took me out of the miry clay, set my feet upon a rock to stay.

Thank God. If you can't sing about anything else, sing about the fact that your name is written in God's book of life, and that's good enough. Heaven is my eternal home.

Hallelujah. I used to tell the choir at Times Square Church, if you're going through hell, just give thanks that you're going through, you're not staying there. Give thanks.

Lift your voice to God. Lift your voice to God and thank Him. That's not your eternal destiny.

Your eternal destiny is a place where there's no more sin, no more sorrow, no more sickness, no more trouble, no more fear, no more dying. Until that day, we have to go through the storms, and I think we sang about it earlier. When the floods come and the fire comes, I'm not going to be overwhelmed.

I'm not going to be drowned. I'm not going to be burned. God is going to go with me and keep me all the way.

Surely, Psalm 91 verse 3, He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. Those things that are sent to take away your confidence or your freedom, He will deliver you. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge.

His truth will be your shield and your buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. That seemingly describes the whole society we're living in today.

A thousand may fall at your side and 10,000 at your right hand, but it will not come near you. Only with your eyes you will look and see the reward of the wicked. I don't wish ill on any person, so please don't misunderstand how I'm about to say this, but walking down the street that day singing that song, I could see the reward of wickedness all around me.

I could see the tears, the anguish, the anger, the incivility, the drugs. You could smell the drugs on the street, all the rewards of wickedness, and thank God it doesn't come near me. Thank God it's not part of my life.

Thank God I'm not going there. Thank God I have the promise of God all around me, that a thousand may fall on this side and 10,000 on that side, but it's not coming near me, not going to touch my house, not going to take my children, not going to touch my grandchildren, because my trust is in the living God. Because you've made the Lord who is my refuge, even the most high your dwelling place.

No evil will befall you, nor any plague come nigh your dwelling. A little bit backwards in the Psalms, Psalm 57, verses 1 to 11, David says these words, Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for my soul trusts in you, and in the shadow of your wings I will make my refuge until these calamities have passed by. I will cry out to God most high, to God who performs all things for me.

He shall send from heaven and save me. He reproaches the one who would swallow me up, and God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. My soul is among lions.

I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be above the earth. I love the way David finishes that verse.

He talks about, there's people out there wanting to devour me. They're set on the unbridled passions of anger and lust are in their voices. Their teeth are sharp like arrows.

Their tongue is a sharp sword. And then he finishes the verses, Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be above the earth. They've prepared a net for my steps.

My soul is bowed down. They've dug a pit before me. Into the midst of it, they have fallen themselves.

Every snare the enemy has laid for me, David is saying, he's going to fall headlong into it himself, because I have put my trust in God. God is my confidence. God will keep me.

He will not fail me. He says, My heart is steadfast. O God, my heart is steadfast.

I will sing and give praise. I will. Now, David is writing this when he's fleeing from Saul in a cave.

Do you understand? This is not really an optimum. He's not laying on a bed of ivory with a harp, writing a song. He's in a cave.

A madman is trying to take away his life. And all around him, he doesn't even know anymore who to trust. But he says these words, My heart is steadfast.

O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and give praise. Awake, my glory.

David is talking to himself. He says, Wake up, my song. Wake up, band.

Wake up. It sounds like everybody's falling asleep on the platform, and David is saying, Wake up. Wake up.

Wake up, all the instruments of music. I will awaken at dawn. I will praise you, O Lord, among the peoples.

I will sing to you among the nations. For your mercy reaches into the heavens, and your truth into the clouds. Hallelujah.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be above all of the earth. Now, that is a worshiper. That is a man who has a song that can be seen.

You often wonder what made those men who came into that cave with David. They came in distressed and discontent and in debt. And they went into that cave, and the Scripture tells us they came out, and they were willing to fight lions and giants and take on the impossible.

And not only were they made mighty there, they stayed mighty. They were listed as the mighty men of David. They went in distressed, discontent, in debt, half defeated, if not all defeated, and they came out ready to fight.

Could it be? Could it be that they just encountered a man with a song in that cave? Could it be that they just saw somebody with a source of strength that was deeper than anything that this world knows anything about? What was it that challenged them to come out of that cave and fight? What was it that they saw in the life of David that was so mighty in a sense that they said, well, God, if you can do that for him, you can do that for me. And I believe in great measure it was this ability to worship God in the midst of the worst circumstances. David is walking down his street as they are, and everything around is not going right as it often does, it doesn't for many of us.

But yet it couldn't take away the song that was in his heart, and the men probably began to look at this and listen to this song in their hearts. They said, David said, he took me out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, set my feet on a rock, established my steps, and put a new song in my mouth, praise to our God, and many will see it and fear and trust in the Lord. That's what I believe happened to those men.

They saw it. And the sense of awe of who God is got into their hearts, a sense of only God could give this man the ability to worship at this time. Only God could give him these words that are coming from his lips.

Only God could do this in the midst of the difficult situation he finds himself in. And then the thought comes, as Pastor Teresa shared in part, because she met some Christian people when she was 18 years of age, if God can do that for him, maybe God can do that for me. Maybe God can give me a song like that.

Maybe the men in that cave, I'm only conjecturing, but maybe they began to pray and say, God, if you did that for that man, if you gave that man that kind of a song, he shouldn't be singing songs of praise right now. A lunatic is trying to take his life. The anointing that was once upon him seems to be not carrying him.

They couldn't see it with their natural eye, but there's still a song inside his heart that can't be taken away. And I think some of those men just thought, well, God, I want that song. I want that confidence.

I want to abide in you. I want you to be the one who is the source of my life, and the source of my strength, and the source of everything that I will be in the future. I'll finish with these words.

The psalmist says in Psalm 40 verse 11, he says, Do not withhold your tender mercies from me, O Lord. Let your lovingkindness and your truth continually preserve me. I'm speaking to somebody online tonight.

Listen to me. I'm going to read to you the words of God. For innumerable evils have surrounded me.

There's a lot of people listening tonight that you could say, Pastor, that's me to a T. I mean, I just feel like I'm surrounded on all sides. I've got pornography on this side. I got alcohol on this side.

I got anger on this side. I've got people at work against me on that side. I've got people that hate me over here on this side.

And the psalmist said innumerable. I can't even number the evils that have surrounded me. And my own iniquities have overtaken me to the point where I can't look up.

This was King David at one point in his life. He said, not only just things around me, but things inside of me that want to overtake me to the point where I can't even lift my head now in the presence of God. He says there are more than the hairs on my head and my heart is failing me.

Be pleased, Lord, to deliver me. Oh, Lord, make haste to help me. Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who seek to destroy my life.

Let them be driven backwards and brought to dishonor who wish me evil. Let them be confounded because of their shame who say to me, David says they're pointing the finger at me. These demonic powers, these old sins, the critics that don't believe I'm ever going to amount to anything.

They're pointing their finger and saying, aha, we knew it. You're not going to make it. All the promises that seemed one time they were yours are now falling through your fingers.

But David says, let all those who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. Let such as love your salvation. Say continually, the Lord be magnified, but I am poor and needed.

Yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer. Do not delay.

Oh, my God. And this was the prayer of David. He said, God, don't delay to help me.

And may I say something to somebody online tonight? You stop delaying coming to God for your help. It's not God that's delaying coming to you. It's you that are delaying coming to God.

He died so that you can come back into living relationship. He died to give you a reason to live. He died to give you forgiveness for the wrong that you've done.

He died to give you an assurance that when you die, heaven is going to be your eternal home. He died to put a new song inside of your heart that many will see and it will produce in them a sense of awe and they too will begin to trust in God. He'll put a song inside of you, ma'am or sir, that you don't have to tell your family what happened.

They'll see it. They'll see the song in you before you even open your mouth in any kind of praise to God. But what you have to do is stop delaying coming to God.

Stop putting it off. Stop trying to get yourself all prettied up so you can come to him. Just come exactly the way you are.

Just as those men came into that cave with David. They were a mess. They got in over their heads financially and they were full of despair.

But God met them there and when they came out they were never the same. And they're listed in the Bible as David's mighty men. You can read it yourself sometime.

You too can be listed as one of the mighty persons that God touched and used for his glory in this last godless hour in which we're now living. He will put a new song within your heart if you will admit that you need a savior. If you will believe that Jesus Christ was God's love gift to you.

Paying the price for your wrong. Doing your time, may I put it that way, so that you can be free. And if you will begin to confess him with your mouth and just say you first do it to God.

Say Jesus you are my my God. I'm giving you my life tonight. If you will do that and then start to tell somebody.

Tell your friends. Just tell somebody what you've done. You don't have to say much more.

Just say I prayed with this guy on on the internet last night. I gave my life to Jesus Christ. It's all you got to do.

It's all I did. It's all you got to do. So I'm going to lead you in a prayer right now.

I'm going to ask you to repeat the words after me. And everybody here is going to pray the same prayer. Just so that to give you the encouragement you need tonight.

So you'll know you're not alone. Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for loving me.

Thank you for giving yourself for me. And paying the price for all the wrong things that I've done. Today I open to you my heart.

And my life. And I invite you to come into my life. I won't delay anymore.

I invite you to be my savior. My trust. My hope.

My future. And my God. I believe that you are receiving me as I pray.

I believe that the power of my sin is being broken. And that new hope is coming into my heart. And one day heaven will be my home.

Until that time I'm going to live for you Jesus. I'm going to trust you. I'm going to learn what it means to abide in you.

From this day forward you are my God. I am your child. In Jesus name.

If you did that tonight as an act of faith. Your first ever act of faith. Text the word decided to 51,000.

Just do it right now if you have your phone with you. Decided to 51,000. A video will pop up later on your screen from Times Square Church telling you how to grow from where you are right now.

How do I, what do I do now? And we will try our best to answer those questions for you. We're going to come back in just a moment. And we're going to share communion together.

And how exciting it is to know that somebody out there, I just know there's somebody there tonight that you've given your life to Christ. And you've joined heaven's choir. Maybe one day you'll be going the opposite way to me on Broadway in New York City singing your song.

I walk in the presence of God. You'll have your own words, your own tune, your own song. Maybe we'll meet there.

We'll stop and just share a moment together. How wonderful that would be. Love you so much.

And thank God for you listening tonight and opening your heart to Jesus Christ.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Jt3ViyU-B-U.mp4>

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