Who Shall Abide

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On Psalm 15, the Sojourner Who Becomes a Permanent Resident, and the Epilogue Being Written Across a Lifetime

The Hospital-Bed Experience

Sometimes we wait until we cannot trust anything else before we finally trust the Lord. It is what I call the hospital-bed experience. We have done everything else we know how to do. Every other resource has been deployed. Every other safety net has failed. And finally, with nothing else available to us, we say, last resort, and turn to the One we should have turned to long before. The old hymn says it: "'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus." But that sweetness, in honest experience, is almost always the sweetness we discover after we have trusted him. Not before. The trustworthiness of God is the thing we find when we cannot trust anything else. And then we realize, with painful clarity: God, I should have done that a long time before this.

The trustworthiness we discover at the hospital bed is the trustworthiness that was available to us all along. The Father's reliability did not begin when our other options were exhausted. Our recognition of his reliability began when our other options were exhausted. The change was in us, not in him. And once you have had the hospital-bed experience, you spend the rest of your life learning to trust earlier, to come to him not as the last resort but as the first instinct.

Bob Is Living the Epilogue

I was struck this morning by the testimonies we heard earlier in the service. Some lives, by the time you reach their later chapters, are essentially the epilogue of a Psalm-15-shaped life. Brother Bob's lifetime is one example. His epilogue is not being composed at the last minute. It is the natural concluding paragraph of a story that has been written, line by line, across decades of doing what is right and speaking what is right.

Did Bob always do what was right? Did he always speak what was right? Probably not. None of us has. But the story of his life, and every life in this room is testifying to its own version of the same pattern, is the sustained story of someone who has done what is right and spoken what is right. The epilogue of any life is composed throughout the life, not at the end of it. You cannot live an entire life of self-serving choices and then receive a beautiful inscription on the tombstone. The tombstone is fiction unless the life it summarizes was actual.

Marcus Aurelius, quoting someone before him, asked the same question. What is on your tombstone? What is the epilogue of your life going to be? What is being written there right now, while you are still composing it? If my wife inscribed me at the end ("great guy, loving husband, great father") and the actual record of my life was abuse and infidelity and theft from people who trusted me, the inscription would be fiction. The epilogue is being earned every day. It is a lifetime of going through life trusting God, trying to find a way to live with integrity. And the integrity earns the inscription, paragraph by paragraph, across the years.

Brother Mears and Psalm 15

And there is a personal backstory underneath my arrival at Psalm 15 today. Cornelius Mears (Brother Mears, the previous pastor of this assembly and my own first pastor) was the man God used to bring me into the kingdom and into pastoral work. Toward the end of his life,

as his memory began to soften and he could no longer hold the same range of preaching material he had once carried, Brother Mears began to gravitate back to a small number of key passages. Psalm 15. Hebrews 11. Matthew 28. A handful of others. He would return to these passages again and again across his final years.

And a man about my age came to me back then and said, “there is something in those passages we are not getting. Brother Mears keeps going back to them. Maybe we should be paying attention to what he is seeing.” And, honestly, I made fun of the question at the time. I said something dismissive: Brother Mears is not feeling his best, that is why he keeps repeating the same passages, there is nothing in particular we are missing. I was wrong. The man was right. There was something in those passages I was not getting, and Brother Mears, in his deepening simplicity at the end of his life, was returning to exactly the material that mattered most.

Repetition is the mother of learning. To hear things over and over is how things eventually get into the heart at a level mere intellectual assent cannot reach. And Brother Mears’s late-life repetitions were the gift of a wise man simplifying down to the essentials at the end of his ministry. Decades later, I find myself returning to Psalm 15 for the same reason. There is something in these five verses I have been needing for a long time. Repetition is the mother of learning. Let me read it slowly:

> Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change; he who does not put out

his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved. (Psalm 15:1–5)

Horizontal Toward Vertical

Five verses. And not one of them mentions sacrifices. No blood of bulls and goats. No temple offerings. No ceremonial observance. Every single instruction in Psalm 15 is about how we interact with one another. The vertical relationship with God turns out to be sustained by the horizontal relationship with our neighbors.

That connection we long for and need, that connection with God that we all sense we are missing, is fulfilled in our connection with one another. The right connection with one another. We all say there is a "God-shaped hole" in every human being. The irony of the situation is that the God-shaped hole is filled, in lived experience, by the right relationships with others. That is the structural surprise of Psalm 15. The Psalmist who wrote it had clearly experienced both vertical and horizontal relationship and recognized that one feeds the other. The horizontal does not replace the vertical, but the horizontal becomes the medium through which the vertical is sustained.

Are You Sure You Even Have a Canoe?

And on the necessity of horizontal relationship in the assembly, let me preserve one of Brother Mears's sayings that has stayed with me for decades. A man came to him once and announced that he was leaving the assembly. "I am going to go paddle my own canoe," was the way he put it. He was done with church. He was going to handle his relationship with God privately and individually, without the entangling commitments of a local body of believers.

And Brother Mears, with his characteristic laugh, would tell this story for years afterward. Every time he came to the punchline, he laughed the same laugh. He would say, “I wondered about that guy. Are you sure you even have a canoe?”

The joke is sharper than it first appears. The man assumed he had the spiritual equipment to navigate the journey alone. Brother Mears, with the gentle skepticism of a man who had watched many such departures, wondered whether the equipment had ever actually been there in the first place. We can declare our independence from horizontal relationship without ever testing whether our own interior would actually float without it. And the testing usually happens too late to be helpful.

This need for one another, the Psalmist is telling us, is significant. It is not optional equipment for the kingdom journey. It is the canoe. Without it, the journey does not happen, or, if it appears to happen, the appearance is not what it seems.

The Sojourner

Now look at the verb in Psalm 15:1: “Lord, who shall abide in Your tabernacle?” The Hebrew verb translated “abide” (gur) is actually the verb for “sojourn.” Your English translation may handle this poetically, but the underlying word is the technical term for a foreigner-in-temporary-residence. Who shall sojourn in Your tent?

And this is the same verb used in Leviticus 19:33–34: “if a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself.” Same verb in Exodus 22:21 about not oppressing the sojourner. Same verb in Genesis 12:10 when Abraham sojourned in Egypt during the famine. Same verb across the Pentateuch for the experience of being a displaced person finding refuge in a foreign land.

This is the word for what happens when people who are destitute (for political, economic, religious reasons) find themselves rejected or displaced from their land of safety and find themselves exposed in another land where they have no inherited rights, no native protections, no citizen-status. And the Psalmist is asking, who can sojourn in the tent of God? Who can come into the divine encampment as a foreigner-in-temporary-residence and receive the protection a sojourner receives in any rightly-ordered jurisdiction?

Most of us, by the spiritual diagnostic, are sojourners. We do not have inherited rights in the kingdom of God. We did not come from there originally. We have shown up at the divine encampment as foreigners who have lost the land we came from and have nowhere else to go. And the question of who may sojourn, who may be received as a refugee in the divine tent, is genuinely a question. Not everyone gets in. The Psalmist is going to specify the entry-conditions for the sojourner in the verses that follow.

And Paul picks up exactly this language in Ephesians 2:

“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:18–19).

You are no longer strangers and foreigners. The Greek for “foreigners” (paroikos) is the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew gur from Psalm 15. Paul is announcing that the people who, by their natural status, would have been sojourners-in-the-tent have been promoted by the cross to fellow-citizens-in-the-household. The temporary-residence status has been upgraded to permanent residency.

Becoming God's Neighbor

And the second clause of Psalm 15:1 makes this upgrade explicit. "Who may dwell in Your holy hill?" The Hebrew verb here (shakan) means something closer to "permanently dwell" or "settle down as a resident." You get your green card. You take your oath. You become a permanent resident of the divine mountain. No longer a stranger and pilgrim. No longer a sojourner-in-temporary-residence. A neighbor of God.

Hold that phrase. A neighbor of God. That is what permanent residency on the holy mountain actually means. You become, by spatial proximity to the divine encampment, the next-door neighbor of the One who tabernacles there. Your wall joins his wall.

And Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 turns out to be talking about exactly this kind of neighbor-relationship. The lawyer asks Jesus, "who is my neighbor?," and Jesus tells the story of the Jewish man beaten and left for dead on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, the Jewish priest and Levite who passed by without stopping, and the Samaritan who stopped, bound up the wounds, poured in oil and wine, transported the man to an inn, and paid for his recovery.

"'So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?' And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise'" (Luke 10:36–37).

Notice that the lawyer cannot even bring himself to say the word "Samaritan." He says "the one who showed mercy." The category had been so culturally loaded that he could not pronounce it. And Jesus says: go and do likewise.

And here is the staggering application. We have been brought near to God. We are abiding with him in his tent. We have, by his initiative, become neighbors of God himself. And

what is God then willing to do for us as his neighbors? He is willing to do for us what the Samaritan did for the beaten Jewish man on the road. The neighbor-relationship is not abstract. It is concrete, costly, and sustained across whatever it takes to bring the wounded neighbor to recovery. We are the beaten Jewish man on the road. God is the Samaritan who stops, binds up our wounds, transports us to the inn, and pays for our recovery. And we, once we have received that neighbor-treatment from him, become equipped to give it to whoever is lying beaten on the road next to us.

Blamelessly: Wholehearted Devotion

Now Psalm 15 specifies the qualifications for the sojourner-becoming-resident. And the first qualification is the master-category that contains everything else. “He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:2).

Walks uprightly. The Hebrew word (tamim) is the word for blameless, whole, complete, integrated, having integrity. I love the English word integrity for this purpose: it carries the same root as integrated and integer, the whole number, the undivided. The person of integrity is the person who is undivided in heart and conduct, who is the same person inside and outside, who does not split into one self for public display and another self for private comfort.

Wholehearted, complete devotion to the Lord. That is what God is asking for. No less. And that is what trust in God is all about. It is wholehearted, not partial. Half-hearted devotion is its own diagnostic. If we are half-hearted toward the Father, we are functionally trusting whatever-we-are-saving-the-other-half-for.

And Psalm 15 then breaks the master-category of integrity into two operational subcategories. The acts we do, and the words we say. What we do, and what we speak. These two together determine whether we are whole and complete and integral.

Works Righteousness, Speaks the Truth

"And works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart." Two clauses. The act of doing right toward our neighbor. The act of speaking truth in our heart.

The first clause is about external conduct, what we actually do when we encounter our neighbor. Do we do what is right by them? Do we treat them in a way that aligns with the kingdom's standard rather than with our own convenience? The conduct is observable. It either happens or does not happen. And the cumulative record of our conduct toward our neighbors is one of the two visible marks of the integrated life.

The second clause is about internal alignment, "speaks the truth in his heart." Notice the location of the speech. Not principally the truth spoken to others. The truth spoken in the heart. The truth our interior is honest about with itself, before any external speech occurs.

Psalm 4:4–5 catches the same internal-alignment requirement:

"Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord" (Psalm 4:4–5).

Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. That is the internal-alignment exercise. We lay down in the night, let the day's adrenaline subside, and let the truth come up from the interior without the daytime distractions covering it. And then in the morning, the truth that has risen in the night's stillness is available to be spoken in the day's encounters.

The Thursday-Night Email

And this happened to me, with embarrassing specificity, just this past Thursday night.

The company I work for has been going through a difficult period. The news has been public, the stock has been under pressure, and the internal environment has been strained. Earlier in the season, I had signed a vendor contract for slightly over a million dollars for a project I had

been leading. The first installment, about two hundred fifty thousand dollars, was due. I had allocated funding from one internal account to another, instructed the finance team to issue the check, and considered the matter handled.

At nine-thirty on Thursday night, an email arrived in my inbox. “Sorry, we cannot do that. There is no funding for this project. We are going to have to take this to the highest levels of the organization to get approval.” In a season of corporate budget tightening, suddenly the money I had already contractually committed was not available, and a senior-leadership escalation was being proposed. My blood pressure spiked. My ears began ringing with anger.

And I began composing a response. The sender was several levels below me in the organizational hierarchy. I had the positional power to crush her with a single message. And I started typing. I did not put it all in bold letters, but the bold-letter energy was in every word. “You figure it out. Get the money. Make this happen. I will not accept this answer.” Have you ever composed one of those messages? Have you ever felt your finger hovering over the send button while the rest of your interior knew, dimly, that pressing it would be a mistake?

My wife was sitting beside me. She watched me type. And she said the seven-word sentence that may have saved my Friday morning. “Just put it down. Sleep on it.” I came as close as I could to ignoring her. But something in me (some residual respect for her wisdom, some Brother-Mears-trained instinct, some Psalm-4-flavored awareness of what happens to night-typed emails) listened. I deleted the angry message. I composed a four-word replacement: “Let us discuss tomorrow.” I scheduled an eight-o’clock meeting on the morning calendar. And I went to bed.

I meditated within my heart on my bed that night. Not formally. Not piously. Just lying there, watching the anger drain out of my interior across the hours, letting the actual shape of the

situation surface underneath the adrenaline. And when I came down to the eight-o'clock meeting on Friday morning, the words that came out of my mouth were seasoned with a grace that would have been entirely absent at nine-thirty on Thursday night.

The whole thing turned out to be a misunderstanding about accounting categories. The finance team had thought I wanted to convert capital dollars into operating dollars, when what I actually wanted was a different specific kind of allocation that they had not initially recognized. Once we sorted out the accounting categories, the issue resolved in about fifteen minutes. Virtual hugs all around on the Teams call. "Oh, it is great working with you, Rob."

And if I had sent the Thursday-night email, the same Friday-morning resolution would have happened, but the relational damage would have lasted for years. Months of slow rebuilding to repair what could have stayed undamaged. The Psalm-15 instruction, speak the truth in your heart, is not principally about religious piety. It is about waiting long enough for the actual truth of the situation to clarify before you speak. And the night, with its slow drainage of the day's adrenaline, is often where the actual truth surfaces. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.

Workplace Shading

And there is a more pervasive version of the same diagnostic. Sometimes my boss asks my opinion about another colleague. "What do you think about that person? Blah, blah, blah, blah." And my honest interior, if I checked it carefully, would say: actually, I think he is doing fine. I do not see what the boss seems to see. I think the boss may be wrong about him.

But I do not want to create problems with the person who controls my paycheck. So I shade. "Yeah, I do not know. I am not sure what to think about him." That is not integration. That is not speaking the truth in the heart. That is a calculated diplomatic non-answer designed to

keep me safely positioned in the boss's good graces while my interior knows I am being less than honest.

And underneath the shading is a question about who actually controls my future. Is it my boss? Or is it the King of the universe? Whose verdict on my faithfulness matters more: the boss's verdict that determines whether I keep my job, or the King's verdict that determines what gets written on my eventual tombstone?

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). Jesus's observation is structural. If my heart is divided, my speech will be divided. If my heart is fully integrated around the King's authority, my speech will follow. Speaking the truth in the heart is not an isolated ethical practice. It is the outflow of a heart that has been integrated around a higher allegiance than career security.

The Captain's Log

And there is a related diagnostic about how truth can be selectively deployed even when it is technically accurate. Let me tell you the captain's-log story.

A captain wrote in his ship's log one day, "the first mate was drunk today." The first mate, upon reading the log entry, came to the captain in distress. "Why did you write that down? Why did you have to record that for posterity?" And the captain replied, "I am simply writing the truth."

The next morning, the first mate got up early and wrote in the log, "the captain was sober today."

Let that one settle on you for a moment. Because the entry is technically true. The captain was, in fact, sober that day. But the entry implies, by the choice to record it as remarkable, that

there were other days on which the captain was not sober. The truth of the specific claim creates a false impression about the broader pattern.

That is how subtle the integrity-violation can get. Truth-telling that selectively deploys true statements to create false impressions is itself a form of speaking-untruth-in-the-heart, even when no individual sentence is technically false. Sometimes truth needs to be looked at carefully. Sometimes we have to ask, why am I sharing this true detail right now? What impression is the timing of my disclosure designed to create? Am I telling the truth to honor the truth, or am I telling the truth to damage the person I am ostensibly being honest about?

Three Vices

Then Psalm 15 gives us three corresponding vices, three negative-form instructions that mirror the three virtues we just covered. “He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend” (Psalm 15:3).

The first vice is backbiting with the tongue. The Hebrew word for backbite (ragal) is closely related to the word for walk that appeared in verse 2. The person who walks uprightly does not, with his tongue, walk the wrong way. Backbiting is walking-with-the-tongue, taking your tongue on a circuit through other people’s reputations the way feet take you on a circuit through actual neighborhoods. The tongue covers ground it should not be covering, visiting reputations it should not be visiting.

Communities are undermined by backbiting more than by almost any other failure. Companies are undermined by it. Marriages are undermined by it. Friendships are undermined by it. The tongue walks where the feet would not be welcome, and the cumulative damage of the tongue’s unauthorized travels eventually shows up in the relationships the tongue has been walking through.

The second vice is doing evil to the neighbor. That counters the works-righteousness virtue of verse 2. The neighbor-relationship requires concrete kindness in conduct, not concrete harm.

And the third vice is taking up a reproach against one's friend, the idea of discrediting our neighbor. Discrediting is the social-removal mechanism by which we mark a person as no longer part of our community. We make the verbal moves that signal to the surrounding community that this person should be disowned.

Matthew Perry in the Hot Tub

And let me confess a very recent instance of exactly this discrediting reflex.

Just this past week, the actor Matthew Perry died, the actor best known for playing Chandler on the Friends television series. The news reported that he had drowned in his hot tub. And as I was watching the report, the first words out of my mouth were, "Oh, he was probably on something."

I have no idea whether he was on something or not. He may have had a heart attack. He may have had a medical event entirely unrelated to anything in his personal history. But the reflex of my mouth was to assume the worst, to discredit, to attribute the death to moral failure rather than to medical misfortune. And that reflex is, in Psalm 15's exact terms, taking up a reproach against my neighbor, even a neighbor I had never met, who lived far from my life, who had no part in my community.

If I will reflexively discredit a celebrity I do not know, what is my reflex going to be with the people I actually live near? The diagnostic surfaces in the safe case (the distant celebrity) and reveals the operating pattern that probably also shows up in the consequential cases (the actual neighbors). And God is saying; I have not put your neighbor out of my community. They have

not been formally rejected by me. So when you go around speaking the discrediting word about them, you are creating, by your speech, a perception that contradicts the actual standing they have in my eyes.

Stop Exalting Punks

And then Psalm 15 turns to a positive instruction that Brother Mears used to summarize, with his characteristic plainness, in a four-word sentence I have never forgotten. “Stop exalting punks.”

Listen to Psalm 15:4: “in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord.” The vile person, the one whose life is the negative of everything Psalm 15 has just described, who slanders with the tongue, harms the neighbor, discredits the friend, and so on: that person is, in the integrated life, despised. Not honored. And the person who fears the Lord, the one who lives the Psalm-15 pattern from the inside out, that person is honored.

And we live in a world that has inverted exactly this. We exalt punks. We give them television shows, social-media followings, political offices, cultural authority. And we tend to ignore, or at best politely-and-quietly-acknowledge, the people who are actually doing the integrated work of doing right and speaking right. The Brother-Mears-shaped figures in our communities, who never make the public-attention list because their lives are not optimized for public attention; those are the people Psalm 15 says we should be honoring.

“Stop exalting punks. Honor the ones who fear the Lord.” That is the cultural-criticism component of Psalm 15, distilled into the four-word distillation Brother Mears spent his ministry repeating. And it remains exactly as relevant now as it was when he was preaching it. Maybe more relevant.

Sworn to His Own Hurt

"He who swears to his own hurt and does not change" (Psalm 15:4). That is integrity in commitment-keeping. You made an oath. The oath has turned out to cost more than you anticipated. You honor the oath anyway.

This shows up in ordinary ways. Have you ever told someone: "yes, I will call you as soon as I am done. Friday will work for me. I will see you at three.," and then completely failed to follow through? You made an oath. You are not being true to your word. And the next time the person interacts with you, your word will carry less weight, because they will remember the unkept commitment.

Now there are honest breakdowns. Sometimes things come up that genuinely prevent the commitment from being kept. The integrity-move in those cases is to acknowledge the breakdown and repair it. "Brother, I know I promised such-and-such, but this has come up. Can I make it work this other way?" That is acknowledging a breakdown and fixing it. We can confess it and repair it. There is no problem there.

The problem is the person who makes oaths and never circles back, who lets the unkept commitments accumulate without acknowledgment. The cumulative effect of unacknowledged broken promises is the slow degradation of the person's word in the community. And the word, once degraded, takes years to rebuild. Psalm 15 is asking us to be the kind of people whose word does not need degrading and rebuilding because we hold to it even when it turns out to be more expensive than we anticipated.

Money Without Usury

And the final clause of Psalm 15: “He who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent” (Psalm 15:5). Two specific economic ethics. Do not lend at exploitative interest. Do not accept bribes that work against the powerless.

This is not principally a prohibition on all interest-earning activity. You can put your money into a retirement account and earn a return on it; there is nothing in Scripture against that. The prohibition is specifically against exploitative lending, taking advantage of people who have no power and no alternative. Charging desperate borrowers usurious rates because they have nowhere else to go. Lending to the poor at terms designed to ensure they cannot repay, so that you can foreclose on their collateral.

And the broader application is to every situation where we have something others need and our terms-of-sharing determine whether they survive or fail. How open are we to sharing what we have? How willing are we to release the leverage our resources give us over people who have less than we do? The Psalm-15 economic ethic is the open-handed economic ethic, the refusal to convert our resource-advantage into permanent power over people who lack the same resources.

We live in a world that does this every day. Large organizations take advantage of people who have no power to advocate for themselves. Think back to 2008 and 2009. Millions of people lost their homes and jobs. The largest financial institutions received billions of dollars in bailouts and continued to pay their executives substantial bonuses and severance packages. I am not against people being paid for the work they do. But I am certainly against a system in which the people with no power are the ones who absorb the losses while the people with all the power are

the ones who absorb the bailouts. That is the structural inversion of Psalm 15. The Psalmist would not have written sympathetically about it.

Never Be Moved

And the final line of Psalm 15 names the consequence of living this way. “He who does these things shall never be moved” (Psalm 15:5).

Never be moved. Permanent residents in the kingdom of God. Permanently accepted. Permanently neighbors of the One who tabernacles on the holy hill. The sojourner who came in as a refugee has, by living the Psalm-15 pattern across a lifetime, become a permanent citizen whose standing in the divine encampment cannot be revoked.

Brother Mears spent the final years of his ministry returning to this Psalm because he had figured out, by then, that it described exactly what he had been doing across his decades of pastoral work. He had been a Psalm-15 person. He had walked uprightly. He had worked righteousness. He had spoken truth in his heart. He had refused to backbite. He had honored those who feared the Lord. He had kept his word at cost. He had refused to exploit the powerless. And his epilogue, by the time his memory began to soften, had already been substantially composed. The line, “this man shall never be moved,” was already legible across his concluding years.

A Call to Action, Not Condemnation

And as I sat in the presence of God this morning, I was feeling how far short I fall, so often, of every one of the Psalm-15 instructions. The Thursday-night email almost-went out. The workplace-shading on the colleague’s name happens regularly. The Matthew-Perry-in-the-hot-tub discrediting reflex was last week. I am not yet a Psalm-15 person. Not consistently. Not at the level the Psalmist requires.

And that recognition is not condemnation. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). The shortfall is not the verdict. The shortfall is the call to action.

I want to dwell in his tent. I want to be God's neighbor. I do not want my wall to be at the end of the block or around the corner in the next town over. I want my wall to join his wall. Because that is where the presence of God is, and that is where the goodness happens. That is where the sojourner-becomes-permanent-resident-becomes-neighbor transformation completes itself. And the way to get my wall next to his wall is to keep showing up to the Psalm-15 instructions, one situation at a time, across whatever years I have remaining.

Let us trust the Lord this week. Let us go through our days with the integrity Psalm 15 describes. And let us watch the epilogue of our lives composing itself, line by line, into something that, when the inscription is finally written on whatever tombstone remembers us, will not be fiction. It will be the actual report of the actual life we actually lived, by the actual grace of the One who actually pulled us into his tent and made us his neighbors. Amen.