

A Cry of Anguish & Song of Praise

PSALM 22 (PART 3)

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Several weeks ago, we started a series of three lessons on Psalm 22, and it goes back a few weeks before that to when I got home from worship one Sunday morning and realized that I didn't really remember partaking of the Lord's Supper. I might have been distracted, I might have been thinking about something else, but I hadn't given the Supper the attention it deserves. And that scared me, especially in light of Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 11, that we are not to partake of the bread or the cup of the Lord **"in an unworthy manner."** It's not that we need to be worthy - we will never be "worthy" of taking part in the Lord's Supper, but the manner in which we take it needs to be worthy. In other words, at the very least, we need to pay attention to what we are doing, and we need to be thinking very carefully about what Jesus did for us on the cross. I went back to the scriptures, then, and decided to take a deeper look at the crucifixion, and I learned that one of the most graphic accounts of the Lord's death seems to be in the Old Testament, in Psalm 22.

We learned, based on the heading, that the tune was probably somewhat ominous, something dark and very somber. And we learned that this dark and ominous song is divided into three stanzas (or verses, as we would describe them today). We started with the first stanza or paragraph (in verses 1-10), as King David focuses on the "crying out" part of this experience, and he starts with this cry that Jesus quotes from the cross, **"My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"** And although these words were written a thousand years before the time of Christ and hundreds of years before crucifixion was even imagined as a form of execution, we noticed that the words are incredibly accurate in describing what Jesus experienced on the cross, starting with the mental anguish, starting with the feeling of despair and abandonment.

We then continued with the next paragraph, the next verse of this song (in verses 11-21 in our Bibles), and we looked at the "anguish" part of it, the suffering, the pain and the terror that Jesus must have experienced on the cross. This morning, as we come to the end of this song, we come to the "song of praise" part of it, the third stanza, or verses 22-31 in our Bibles.

To put this in context we'll start at verse 1 again, but we will continue through the end. As we focus our thoughts on the crucifixion and on what Jesus did for us, let us please look together at all 31 verses of the 22nd Psalm - Psalm 22:1-31,

¹ *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?
Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.*

² *O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;
And by night, but I have no rest.*

³ *Yet You are holy,
O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.*

⁴ *In You our fathers trusted;
They trusted and You delivered them.*

⁵ *To You they cried out and were delivered;
In You they trusted and were not disappointed.*

⁶ *But I am a worm and not a man,
A reproach of men and despised by the people.*

⁷ *All who see me sneer at me;
They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,*

⁸ *“Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him;
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”*

⁹ *Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb;
You made me trust when upon my mother’s breasts.*

¹⁰ *Upon You I was cast from birth;
You have been my God from my mother’s womb.*

¹¹ *Be not far from me, for trouble is near;
For there is none to help.*

¹² *Many bulls have surrounded me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.*

¹³ *They open wide their mouth at me,
As a ravening and a roaring lion.*

¹⁴ *I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It is melted within me.*

¹⁵ *My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
And You lay me in the dust of death.*

¹⁶ *For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.*

¹⁷ *I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;*

¹⁸ *They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.*

¹⁹ *But You, O Lord, be not far off;
O You my help, hasten to my assistance.*

²⁰ *Deliver my soul from the sword,
My only life from the power of the dog.*

²¹ *Save me from the lion’s mouth;
From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.*

- ²² *I will tell of Your name to my brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.*
- ²³ *You who fear the Lord, praise Him;
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel.*
- ²⁴ *For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.*
- ²⁵ *From You comes my praise in the great assembly;
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.*
- ²⁶ *The afflicted will eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the Lord.
Let your heart live forever!*
- ²⁷ *All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord,
And all the families of the nations will worship before You.*
- ²⁸ *For the kingdom is the Lord's
And He rules over the nations.*
- ²⁹ *All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship,
All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep his soul alive.*
- ³⁰ *Posterity will serve Him;
It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation.*
- ³¹ *They will come and will declare His righteousness
To a people who will be born, that He has performed it.*

As we come to the end, I hope we notice the huge change that takes place right at the end of verse 21 (where we left off a few weeks ago). In verse 21, the author is asking to be saved from all of these terrible things, and the verse ends with David saying, ***“From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.”*** So, there seems to be an answer to prayer, and from that point on, the psalm is different - it moves from this desperate prayer to a song of praise. It's almost as if the prayer was interrupted by God answering it in some way! And if we think of this as applying to Jesus, how did God the Father ultimately answer Jesus' prayers on the cross? God's answer is the resurrection! In my mind, then, I'm putting the resurrection right there at the end of verse 21. But instead of describing the resurrection itself, the author seems to be describing the RESULTS of the resurrection. And that's the SONG OF PRAISE part of this.

In the time we have left, I would divide this last section (verses 22-31) into two parts: First of all, Jesus is worthy of our worship (He deserves the songs that we sing), and then secondly, the story of Jesus is worth telling.

I. **But we start with this idea (in verses 22-26) that JESUS IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP.**

And again, all of this hinges on the resurrection. After the terrible things we've been reading about in the first 21 verses, God answers. And at that point, a change takes place. This song changes from incredibly sad and ominous to the other extreme - as the author breaks out in worship. In fact, we have a song almost like this that we still sing today, "Low in the grave he lay," and so on. We're singing about Jesus being dead and sealed

in the tomb, but then there is a point in that song where everything changes, isn't there! "Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph o'er his foes!" As she was growing up, my wife thought we were singing, "Up from the grave with a hose." But that is not what we sing! "Up from the grave he arose!" That is the turning point in that song. It's slow, and ominous, and almost spooky, but then Jesus comes back from the dead, and everything changes. That is what happens here. After God answers this prayer, the author says, ***"I will tell of your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you."*** And then there is another shift that takes place. Instead of just the author praising God, now the author seems to be leading the congregation in worship. He is "leading the singing," as we might say today. So instead of a description of the resurrection itself, we find ourselves singing along here - this is the IMPACT of the resurrection. This is what the resurrection really means to us. It means that we sing and praise God along with Jesus, who is leading us in this praise.

And in case you're thinking that this might be a bit of a stretch of an application, let's notice how this passage is applied in the New Testament. This passage is quoted in Hebrews 2. The author is making the point in Hebrews that Jesus is better, that Jesus is worthy of our worship. Jesus is better than the angels. Jesus is better than Moses. Jesus is a better High Priest, and so on. We don't need to read that whole passage again, but in that context, the author of Hebrews suggests that because of Jesus' suffering he was ***"crowned with glory and honor"*** (Hebrews 2:9), and the purpose for his suffering and death was to that he would be made ***"like us,"*** so that he might be able to call us ***"brethren"*** (as Al read for us in Hebrews 2:11). And then the author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 22, and he applies it to Jesus and has Jesus saying, ***"I will proclaim Your name to My brethren,"*** and ***"In the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise."*** The purpose of Jesus' suffering, then, is so that he might ***"share in flesh and blood,"*** so that he might partake in the human experience, so that he might be ***"made like his brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest."*** And because he has been tempted through his suffering, he is now able to come to our aid when we are tempted. The application for us, then, is that Jesus is worthy of our worship. He suffered, he died, he came back from the dead, he is our brother, he is worthy in every way, and when we worship, he is with us - he is assembled with us in the great congregation.

And isn't this what the Bible teaches about the Lord's Supper? In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul puts it in the form of a question, ***"Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?"*** Yes, when we partake of the bread and the cup, we are sharing in his blood and body. Jesus, then, is worthy of our praise. As we look back at this passage, we find the word ***"praise"*** four times in just a few verses here! As King David says, we fear him, we glorify him, we stand in awe of him, we seek him. In every way, he deserves having us take some time out of our week to come together.

II. There is a second application of this passage to us today: Not only is Jesus worthy of our PRAISE, but he is also worthy of our PROCLAMATION.

And the idea here in these last few verses is: Because of what he did for us, Jesus deserves to be talked about, and when we talk, the kingdom spreads. In verse 27, we find that all the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before him. The kingdom is the Lord's and he rules over all the nations. All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship. So we have the idea that the kingdom will expand and grow and will spread out all over the world. But the kingdom won't just grow geographically; it will also grow from generation to generation. In verse 30, our children will serve Him as we tell the next generation about what he has done for us. And in verse 31, this message will continue to be preached to those who are not yet born. The kingdom will grow from generation to generation.

And we know that this is just as the Lord intended. After the resurrection, some of the Lord's first words were to his disciples as he said (in Matthew 28:10), ***"Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren...."*** One of the last commands he gave to the apostles (and ultimately to us) was, ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"*** (Matthew 28:19-20). They did preach and teach, and now we have that responsibility. It's up to us in this room to get the word out. His story is worthy of telling. His death and resurrection deserves to be told. We think of what Peter said in Acts 2. He accused the people of murdering God's Son, they asked what they had to do to be saved, and Peter said, ***"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*** We are the ***"children"*** in that promise. We are the ones who are ***"far off."*** And that's what David is saying in the last two verses of Psalm 22. Jesus deserves to be talked about, from generation to generation. This message spreads from family to family, one family at a time, from then all the way to the end of time. And isn't that what we celebrate with the Lord's Supper? Isn't it also a proclamation? As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:26, ***"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."***

So the question for us is: Who do we know who needs to hear about this? Who do we know who needs to hear what Peter said to that crowd back in Acts 2? I don't know about all of you, but everybody I meet needs to hear this.

Conclusion:

As we close, I want us to notice the basis for this praise and proclamation. King David says that we praise and tell others, because ***"He has performed it."*** Because ***"He has done it."*** Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He paid the debt that we could never pay. Some of the commentaries suggested that this last phrase is basically what Jesus said on the cross, right at the end, ***"It is finished. It is accomplished."*** He has done it. And if that is true, it seems, then, that Jesus might have actually quoted Psalm 22 on the cross - at the beginning and at the end. He is worthy of our praise and proclamation. And this is what we celebrate and remember with the Lord's Supper.

Psalm 22, then, is a cry of anguish and a song of praise. The question is: Is this psalm our psalm? Do we understand and appreciate what Jesus did for us? Do we fear him (verses 23 and 25)? And if we do, do we see him as being worthy of our praise? Is Jesus worth telling people about? Are we passing it on to our children? But even before we get there, have we called on his name for salvation? Have we made that appeal to God for a good and clean conscience? In 1 Peter 3:21, Peter explains that we make that appeal to God through the act of baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins.

As we close, we'd like to give everybody here an opportunity to take some of the first steps of obedience. We see what God did for us, and our answer to the cross is to turn to him in faith, turning away from sin, and submitting to his plan for our lives, starting with the act of baptism, a burial in water for the forgiveness of sins. If you'd like to learn more, get in touch. I don't know where you are in your spiritual journey right now, but if we as a church can serve you in some way, if you'd like to look at the scriptures together, let us know. But if you are ready to become a Christian right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

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