

Psalm 22:27-31

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Date: 09 April 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. What great singing, what great songs have been picked, and I presume that was you, but fitting in so well with the psalm that we're going to be looking at this morning. Can I encourage you to either use the Pew Bible, or if you've brought your own Bible, or even allow you to use your iPhone, if that's checking the Bible.

And let's read those last few verses of Psalm 22 this morning, before we delve in to see what it has to say to us.

Today, here, this morning in Edinburgh in Bruntsfield. So Psalm 22, starting from verse 27, where it says, All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before Him.

For dominion belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship. All who go down to the dust will kneel before Him.

Those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve Him. Future generations will be told about the Lord. And they will proclaim His righteousness to a people yet unborn, for He has done it.

[1 : 2 2] And we'll finish there in verse 31. And may God bless His Word to us and bring it alive. Well, as has been said already a few times, it is nearly Easter.

If you don't know how you feel about that, sometimes there can be a slight panic attack, because you realize with all the visitors you may have, the people you're hosting, of all the things that still need to happen.

So I'm really pleased about that little booklet that is being promoted. I'm sorry, Graham, you didn't show them just how little and short it is. So even if you're not a reader, go and get it. And use it this week, particularly, to prepare your hearts for Easter itself.

And I hope this morning may help in that as well. But as we think of Easter, we will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, which is the greatest victory in the whole of humankind.

And people, there have been some great victories, maybe in your memory, in your time. Just think of any time the Scottish rugby team beat the English. Or Andy Murray winning Wimbledon the first time.

[2 : 2 5] Very special. Even still special when he won it the second time. For me, the biggest victory in my memory is 1988. Don't know what you were doing then. Maybe for some of you, that's before your time.

But me being from the Netherlands, that's one of the few times there was victory when the Dutch soccer team won the Euros in 1988. Amazing.

When you look back at it, you think, boy, was that a powerful orange shirt they were wearing. Those orange shirts date very quickly. And it's funny, when I think of all the stories that we share in Sunday school and that I grew up in, I remember most of my favorite ones are about victories, great victories, of little David beating giant Goliath.

What about the one where Gideon was asked to go and beat the Midianites with only 300? Or Elijah, who's on the top of this mountain, dealing with all these priests who are claiming that Baal is truly God, and him on his own, with God on his side.

That's this beautiful and wonderful and exciting victory. And yet any of these people pales, compares to the earth's shattering victory, that we will be celebrating the victory of all victories, when death was defeated and Satan lost.

[3 : 4 2] And the powerful thing is, and I'm actually quite intrigued to know that you've been studying this psalm in detail, taking a couple of verses at a time, but this psalm, through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, anticipated this amazing victory.

Sometimes it's referred to as the fifth gospel of the crucifixion. Isn't that amazing? The fifth gospel account of the crucifixion, because it gives us so much insight into what happened when Jesus died on the cross.

Can I give a, this is a slight side note, but can I recommend reading Psalm 22 in connection with 23 and 24? Because actually all three together answer the question, who is God?

And from Psalm 22, looking at the suffering servant, we move to the great shepherd, and then in Psalm 24, to the glorious king. But even at the end of this psalm, we already get a flavor of this victory, the victorious king, which is what we're going to be looking at.

I also couldn't help but think of Psalm 22 as reading a little bit, like one of the servant songs of Isaiah. I already mentioned it, that the psalm starts with forsakenness, or being despised.

[4 : 56] And a description which is sometimes hard to comprehend, but the person who's writing this is feeling as if his life is being poured out like water. And there's this cry for help in verse 19 through 21.

And in the verses we get, I get the privilege, I get the easy verses, but this is where we see the answer to this call for help in this glorious king.

And so what I would like to look at this morning is, first of all, the identity of this victorious king. Secondly, the accomplishment of this king. And also thirdly then, the right response to this king. Hopefully that is helpful. So the identity of this victorious king, the accomplishment, and then the right response. So first then, the identity. Look with me to verse 28, where verse 28 tells us that kingship or dominion belongs to the Lord.

It may be slightly obvious, but it tells us that the king that is being described here is the Lord.

Obvious in some ways, but actually the word used here is very significant.

[6 : 11] Now being from the Netherlands, English isn't my first language. And if I'm very honest, the word Lord, I associate it with some kind of cold title. Maybe something you see or read in a Jane Austen novel or a Charles Dickens.

Or if you've watched the recent series on the upper chambers of parliament, I can't help it, and I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, but this image of kind of stuffy, wig-wearing, you know, upper house in parliament with Etonian accents kind of picture.

But the truth is actually nearly the opposite. Because the word used here is the word Yahweh or Jehovah.

The name that actually wasn't allowed to be spoken. And so we don't know exactly anymore how it would have been called and what it would have sounded like.

But if you look up in the Bible dictionary, it will tell us that actually strictly speaking, Yahweh is possibly the only real name of the Lord. There's other titles like Elohim, but Yahweh is the name that is connected with God being the God of the patriarchs, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

[7 : 28] And in contrast to this other word or term Elohim, Yahweh is actually a proper noun. It's the name of a person, although the person is divine. And as such, the name Yahweh or Jehovah brings God near.

And we all know that names have associations, don't they? If I mention the name Delia, I presume you're not thinking of fishing, but you're probably thinking of cooking, if you've ever heard of Delia Smith.

Or if I mention Pele, you might think of a far country with an amazing football star. And so names of associations, we get an image, we think of certain things, and the same is meant to happen when we read the word Lord, or Jehovah, or Yahweh.

But it gets lost a little bit, and we can miss all that is there, right there in front of us, that the King is the Lord. Because what associations come with that great name of Yahweh and Jehovah?

Well, for one, it reminds us that our God is a personal God. That our God is, on the one hand, the great Creator. From Genesis 1, verse 1, He is the one that, in the beginning, spoke, and the earth came into being, and gave life its life.

[8 : 47] And the creatures and the variety of, you know, that we're enjoying again, now with the spring coming out, that is the great Creator God. And yet, on the one hand, being the Maker and Creator, He's also the one that can be known, that reveals Himself, who speaks, who loves, and who comes close.

He's the God who can be known, but also who knows us. So rather than a cold title, this God is a personal God. It also ought to remind us that this God and His name is a reminder that God is a

covenantal God.

Now, I've grown up with that word, never fully understanding what it meant, so I shoved it aside for a while, thinking this is old-fashioned language. But I've started to appreciate all that that one term of covenant actually means and involves.

Simply put, it says that God is trustworthy, but it also reminds us that He pursues. His covenant with us and with His people was always His initiative, His idea.

So to think of Yahweh as not just a personal God, but also the covenantal God, reminds us that He is the God who pursues, but also commits. He's the one who leads us, as well as provides for us.

[10:08] That this is the God, the Lord, the King, who's faithful, generous, patient. I'm so glad God is patient with me. And He's also just.

He's the one who said to His people, You are my people. I am the God who brought you out of Egypt. But it's also the name that should conjure up the picture and the image of the compassionate God.

He's not just one of covenants, but He's also one who gives, who's generous, who longs to transform and does it. Who hears, but also comes, as well as saves, which is exactly what our psalm reminds us of.

He is before us, He is behind us, He's above us, and He's beside us. He is the God who is our rock and our refuge. It's all there in that one little word. But if you just read, Lord, would you have got that picture?

For this is the King of this psalm. This is who the King is. And all that He does, He doesn't do begrudgingly, but He's done it because He cares.

[11:17] And He still cares for each one of us here, but also each one of the people out there. Now, not only is this the King of this psalm, when we think of the special Sunday that it is today, of Palm Sunday, all these characteristics, all these images and pictures of God are manifested in Jesus.

For example, on Palm Sunday, when already, having seen that on the clip, we get a little foretaste of the victorious ruler, which Matthew interprets as fulfilling the prophecy, saying, See, your King has come.

So not only is it God Creator who is this amazing King, but we're reminded today that the fulfillment is in Jesus. So Jesus is also that King.

He is God with us. He is God Emmanuel. And if there's one thing that we should take away today, it's just simply, Do we know that King? Do we know that King?

And you know how you can tell whether you know Him or maybe know Him a little bit? Just think of how you pray. I've been challenged this week to realize that when I pray, I pray to the God who Abraham also prayed to.

[12:38] So when I pray, I pray to the God who was there when Jericho fell. He's the God that was there when Jesus gave His life and said, It is finished.

If that is the same God I speak to and come to Him with all that I carry, the worries and issues, is He not able to deal with them just as much now, today?

Because He's the personal God, He's the covenantal God, and He's the compassionate God who cares. But sometimes we know. But the question is, do we know right here in our heart?

Well, I hope this morning we may leave thinking, Thank you, Lord, for not only who you are, but for reminding us of who you are, and will you please help us to know that wherever we find ourselves today, to seek and to know and to experience this King, maybe like never before, but this King of all nations.

So there's the identity of this King. Let's move on then to the accomplishments of this King. Look with me to verse 31, and he had already referred to it as well, where the psalm has a kind of an awkward ending, but a most powerful ending.

[13:51] Because it says simply, and there's no exclamation mark, so we don't know exactly what it would have sounded like, but you can just imagine if this was used in the congregation, that people might have shouted this last verse saying, For he has done it.

The message renders it like this. It says, God does what he says. That's slightly different, but it's a great reminder that God is not only able, but he's also willing, and that he's faithful in that what he says he will do, he will do.

Now, of course, we can't just pull it away from the context of this psalm. Looking at the psalm purely as a psalm, it's answering the plea of verse 19 through 20, Save me.

Save me from death. Save me from this God-forsakenness that I'm experiencing, and the King does. The King rescues and saves.

Isn't that a great encouragement? Like I said, remembering who this God is, that he's still the same Jehovah, still the same Yahweh, that when we come to him, we can come to him with trust.

[15:02] But we don't just trust that he hears us, but we may trust that he will respond, and that he will act, and that he will rescue and save us where we are and where we find ourselves.

And he can, explains the psalmist, because his are all dominion in verse 28. Now what does that mean, dominion? Again, maybe not a word that we use in everyday language, but it basically means that God reigns over all the nations seated on his holy throne.

He is the King, not in a symbolic matter the way it is in my country, in the Netherlands, but even here, but very much that he is the King who is in control of all the affairs of all mankind and of all nations.

This is God who is sovereign, who is all-powerful, like I said, who is able. Sometimes we need to hear that, don't we?

Maybe we've seen God work in our lives, and we know, and we've experienced God being able to answer our prayers, and yet somehow we easily forget, and when we're in a situation, maybe not even too dissimilar, we worry, and we struggle to trust that God, maybe willing this time, still be able to come through.

[16:26] Maybe this psalm reminds us that he is, and he's not only able, but he's also willing, because in verse 31, we're reminded that he reigns with righteousness. Other parts of the Bible reminds us that God is love, God is light.

In him there's no darkness at all. So he doesn't just rule with justice, but he rules with a righteousness that is graceful and loving and compassionate.

And so we find that the psalmist experiences this salvation. It becomes a reality. Hence his conclusion, he has done it.

Reminded me of a poem that a friend of mine wrote. It's the only poem I can remember because it's nice and short. But this is the poem. He said, God is good. God is good.

God is good. Enough said. That's the rendering I get from this psalm. Enough said. He has done it. It's a reminder, of course, of Jesus' own words on the cross where he proclaimed to the world.

[17:35] It is finished. That's our God. That's our King. That was the psalmist's king, but for us, it's not a rescue from a physical death, but it's the rescue from spiritual death, from our God-forsakenness, through the forgiveness of sin.

And so we may know today that if we cry out, just like the psalm is, Lord, save me, he will, for he has done it.

I want us to notice here the assurance that is captured by these words. Because many, if not all of us, can struggle at times with that sense of assurance.

Maybe it's personally, but it can also be historically or culturally. Even the psalmists were told forgot about God's ability and the enemy, you know, they were out there trying to deny God's ability.

I mean, there's plenty of people out there who will help the enemy just like the psalmist then. God is not able. But what do we do in our lives when the kingdom of God feels far away, when we maybe wrestle with that same state of distress that the psalmist was experiencing?

[18:58] When we're looking around and we think, you know, I've got these invitations, but nobody ever responds. It seems the gospel has lost so much of its ground and so much of its power. We haven't seen much growth in the church here.

What's the point? Both this psalm as well as Easter remind us that our God reigns, that He is still in control, hence we must be people who trust in Him.

Not just know Him, but to trust in Him. Don't we sing Because He Lives, I Can Face, tomorrow? Anybody know that song? Sorry, I'm digging back into time.

This is the 70s, I think, isn't it? Slightly dated, but a powerful truth. And so the question today is as a church, but also as individuals, will we, anew and afresh, trust in the Lord?

Maybe even simply when we go with that invitation or that booklet and hand it to somebody to trust in the Lord, maybe God has been working on that person's heart way before you ever got to them with the invitation.

[20 : 05] Let's move on then to the last and third point. The identity of the king, the accomplishments of the king, but thirdly then, what should be the right response? Well, what you need to do here is actually look at some of the verbs and notice the movement.

For example, in verse 27, it speaks of remembering. Sometimes I hate it how often in the Bible it speaks of remembering. Do you know why?

Because it's that reminder that we as human beings, I think all of us, however brainy we are, we are incredibly forgetful. Now, it can be anything as innocent as birthdays, names, but it's the greatness of God we so easily forget and we need to remember.

So that's where things start in this response to the king. Let us just simply remember and take time to remember. But that needs to be followed then by turning.

See that there in verse 27? Remember and then turn to the Lord. And what does that make you think? Remember and turn. What's another word we sometimes use?

[21 : 17] Jesus used. He came to say that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, so therefore repent. And isn't it interesting how it slipped in that repentance is that thing that happens just in between not being a Christian and being a Christian.

But that's it. We've repented. According to Scripture, actually, our life should be lives of repentance, ongoing repentance. Just think of your own life.

If I think of my own life, there's plenty of times where I've repented, but somehow I've managed to wander off again and I need to keep turning back to God. So remembering is followed by turning. But then what is it followed by? It's followed by bowing down and kneeling. What's that an image of? Worship. Worship. I don't know about you.

I'm at Bellevue. We're not a bowing down kind of people. Sometimes somebody dares to raise a hand, but we're, you know, Scottish and passion comes out, you know, in the stadium.

[22 : 19] But when it comes to kneeling, that's just too vulnerable. It's powerful. Maybe I find it powerful because I'm so tall. When I kneel down, I do have that real sense of humility.

And even when I bow my head and close my eyes, I do get a stronger sense that He is God and I'm not. And yet I'm allowed to come into His presence. But you don't have to use kneeling.

But Jesus kneeled as you looked at probably last week at the Garden of Gethsemane. He kneeled out of humility and submission. And so we must be people who do not just remember, do not just turn, but then worship and bow down and kneel.

But then the most challenging one is this. And this is always where, you know, it's great up to a point, isn't it? A lot of us, I think, like to worship.

It depends on the song. Sometimes we think, oh, those are dreadful songs today, weren't they? But we're here in church and we love to worship. But here's the challenge. Because what does the whole movement end in?

[23 : 24] Proclamation. I want you to notice there that there is both encouragement but as well the challenge. The encouragement is that there is that promise that the word of God's righteousness and his victory, which was to be fulfilled in Jesus, was to go out to the next generation that wasn't even born yet, to nations around the world.

And it's happening. It's been happening. We've got a visitor here this morning who's working in Brussels and sometimes in Mexico and he's a reminder that God is at work all over the world. Wonderful.

But we're to be part of that work. Do we know that? We can't just remember and come and worship and not go out and proclaim. We're part of that.

And I think the challenge here is threefold if you allow me these. First of all, I think this whole movement reminds us that this is all to be about the heart, not the head. We're not here to gather and gain information, but it's for that information to sink down and for our hearts to be transformed and moved to worship.

That's the second one, for it to be transformation rather than information. But here's the third one. All of this is to lead to boundaryless, maybe that's not good English, but to boundaryless invitation to share the celebration so we can be here at church and celebrate the victorious king and of what that might mean for us personally.

[24 : 49] But God asks us to go out and share it as well. See, Psalm 22 was used as liturgy. I don't think you, like Bellevue, have a very strong liturgy in that sense.

We don't have a prayer book that we use, but liturgy has a really helpful element to it. Because part of liturgy is actually passing it on to the next generation. And just by repeating it, it's not an emptiness, but it's because we need the repetition for it to start to sink down.

And so Psalm 22 was used as liturgy as part of regular worship, revisit it time and time again to pass it on to the next generation. But not just for our own sake and for our own worship, but also to proclaim these truths to anyone who would hear, to the rich and the poor, to all the families of all the nations, transcending any boundary of time and age and even the physical.

The Psalm is telling us this news should reach far. The partition wall has come down. There's no Jew or Greek. The gospel is for everyone and anyone to hear.

And I hope next Sunday is going to be a reflection of that. Because what God has done for His suffering servant will become and has become a blessing to the rich and poor, Jew and Gentile and people yet unborn.

[26 : 12] the people there is a big challenge. I think for all of us. The same for Bellevue. But are we? Are we the people who go out after we've worshipped and remembered to proclaim, especially this Easter?

And not just to do that out of duty, but in confidence, knowing the King. As we've been singing about the King, but also having experienced for ourselves His rescue.

So let me just sum it up and then I'll end over to Ian. People at Easter, we have something extraordinary to celebrate. Somebody in our church said the controversial thing that Easter is better than Christmas and I have to slightly agree.

I think Easter is what it's all about. This unique personal God dwelt among us. And the willing and able God was victorious on the cross for us over death and over sin itself.

Psalm 22 encourages and invites us to remember to turn, to bow, and then to go out and proclaim.

[27 : 17] Let me pray. Lord, Heavenly Father, we do thank You for Your Word. We thank You for how it speaks to us in our lives today in 2017. Thank You for how it encourages us and reminds us of the incredible richness of Your character and who You've always been and always will be.

Strengthen our faith or if we haven't fully entrusted our heart to You, may we do that today. But first and foremost, Lord, we also pray that You may move our hearts so that we will become those proclaimers of this righteousness.

So that Easter is not an inner house party, but it's shared and made known to a world who has no hope and needs Your forgiveness and Your grace.

Oh, Lord, we pray, come and fill our hearts and meet with us so that we will live lives that please and honor You in all we do. Amen.

Amen. Amen.