

Psalm 22:1-5

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. Can you hear me okay? And are we well? We are well. Put your hands up if you're Scottish. I was praying for your souls this morning. We've come here with heavy hearts. And the fact that you tell me that you are well encourages me no end.

So let's make a pact right now. We will never speak of that again. What happened yesterday? It took me a while to get over it, but I'm there. So here we are this morning. I wonder if I could take a straw poll to begin with. Raise your hand if you're here this morning and you're wearing some kind of jewelry. Can I just be honest? Well, friends, here. Hands in the air. Keep your hand raised if that piece of jewelry is a cross. Right in the air so we can see them. So there's quite a few, isn't there? I know a lot of friends. A lot of my friends wear crosses. This symbol that we see in everyday life, don't we? We see it on church spires as we walk around the city. I remember there used to be a tattoo parlor that I walked past on the way down home at Toll Cross. Big image of a cross. You can get a tattoo of the cross on your arm or wherever else you wanted to get it. We see it on our church logo. It's the centerpiece of our church logo. This image, this symbol that is the centerpiece of Christianity, the recognized symbol of our faith. But I wonder if you've ever asked why? Why the cross? Is it a lucky charm? Is it a fashion statement? Why do Christians get so hung up on remembering one man's death and a death that happened almost 2,000 odd years ago? What is the big deal about the cross? Now, can I just say straight off the bat, that is a wonderful question to ask. And that is a wonderful question to ask, especially if you're here this morning and you're skeptical or you're inquisitive about this whole Christian thing. What is the big deal about the cross? Well, can I invite you, if that is you, then just to hang around for the next little while over the next few weeks as we are going to ask that question and we're going to answer that question. What is the big deal about the cross? It's a question we're going to be asking over the next few weeks as we gear up to Easter. I can't believe Easter's here, almost. Seems like Christmas was just yesterday. Got home the other day and there was three Easter eggs sitting on the kitchen table. Apparently Tesco's were doing half price early on. But it's 35 days until Easter Sunday. 35 days. And what we're going to do over the next five Sunday mornings as we prepare ourselves for Easter Sunday and Easter weekends is we're going to spend some time in Psalm 22. Now, if you have a Bible there, then can I invite you now is the time to turn to Psalm 22.

[3 : 1 4] The Psalm from the pen of King David. And it's a psalm that's describing him going through the most horrific of experiences.

And he's facing the deepest and darkest and ugliest and cruelest of moments. And yet, we read in this Psalm, despite his suffering, he is clinging so steadfastly to the God that he knows and he loves.

Now, if you've got it there, you'll see at the top of this psalm that there's music that goes along with this psalm. These words in this psalm are meant to be sung to the tune of, do you see it there, the dough of the morning. But you've never looked at that part of the psalms before. This is meant to go to the tune of the dough of the morning. Now, no Google search is going to reveal that for you, what that song is. You're not going to find it on iTunes. But if I had to take a guess, I would imagine that it is a song, it's a tune that moves from the minor key to the major key.

Now, why do I think that? Well, this psalm goes from absolute torment and it ends in absolute triumph.

It's a psalm that starts in the minor key and it ends in the major key. But the thing about Psalm 22, this psalm of David, is that this range of emotions and the events that are described here, King David, he never plumbed the depths of and he never reached the heights of where this psalm goes in his lifetime. The truth is that this psalm is not only a descriptive psalm, actually it's a prophetic psalm.

[5 : 02] And that is it points beyond itself to another king who really will taste its depths and who really will scale its heights. You see, it's a psalm that is pointing us to Jesus. And in particular, it's a psalm that is directing us, focusing us on Jesus on the cross.

Now, Charles Spurgeon, famous British preacher from back in the day, he called this psalm a photograph of the cross. And it's the psalm that not only did Jesus quote on the cross, but it is in fact the psalm that Jesus lived on the cross. You see, he is the ultimate king of Psalm 22. He is the forsaken king.

So what is the big deal about the cross? Well, before we get into the first five verses of this psalm, what we're going to do is we're going to stand and we're going to sing one song together.

Before we get into it, hopefully it's just going to focus our minds as we come to this psalm. So the band are still there, just checking. Let's stand and let's sing this great song, amazing love. How can it be? The great line in it, I'm forgiven because you were forsaken. Let's stand together and sing this song. Well, please turn to Psalm 22 and let's read the first five verses of this psalm together. For the director of music, to the tune of the Doe of the Morning, a psalm of David.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer. By night, but I find no rest.

[6 : 58] Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One. You are the one Israel praises. In you, our ancestors put their trust. They trusted and you delivered them. To you, they cried out and were saved. In you, they trusted and were not put to shame. Let me quickly pray as we come to this psalm. Dear Father, we thank you for the immense privilege that it is to gather together as your people this morning. Lord, we ask that as we come to your word that you would speak to us.

Lord, it's our firm conviction that when your word is opened, your voice is heard because you are the living God. Lord, we pray at the outset of our series in Psalm 22 as we build up to Easter, as we think about your son Jesus on the cross. Lord, would you help us by your spirit to comprehend the enormity of what he has done for us. Lord, there are big truths in this psalm this morning. Would you help us hear them? And there's some wonderful truths in this psalm this morning as well, Father. Would you help us to love them? And this is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. So here's my question for you this morning as we get into these first few verses of this psalm. How are you at coping with silence?

I wonder if you're like me. One of the things that I'm not very good at coping with is when I try and phone somebody and they don't answer. I try and phone them again and they don't answer.

And then I try and phone them again and they're still not there. One thing that annoys me, I must say, but the shoe is very much on the other foot sometimes. I have that horrible moment often as a husband when I reach into my phone, I pull it out and I realize that the phone that I thought was on loud was in actual fact on silent. And there are three, four, five missed calls from Alex. And I ring her back and what I say sheepishly, I say, you're right.

[9 : 14] And what does she respond? Why did you not answer? Here's the thing about these first five verses of this psalm. Somebody's calling and the person they are calling is not answering. David is calling to God in these first five verses. He's calling to God and God is not answering him.

As we pick up the psalm at verse one, do you see it there? We see David. He's calling out to God. Is he calling out to God? In actual fact, I think the language here is a lot more emotive than that. He's crying out to God. Feel the pain in his words. Feel the pain in his cry. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

See, it's the cry of bitter anguish. It's a cry of abandonment. It's a cry of separation. Feel it again. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And ultimately, it's the cry of Jesus on the cross. In fact, these are the exact words that both Matthew and Mark recording Jesus speaking on the cross.

[10 : 34] This is the exact phrase that he uses. Interestingly, both Matthew and Mark record them in the original Aramaic. Matthew 27 verses 45 and 46.

Matthew writes this. From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the land. About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eli, Eli, limai sabachthani, which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

It's the cry of our King when he was on the cross. And here's what I want to do just in the 15 or so minutes that we have left. I just want us to think about four things about his cry.

Can you hang on with me? Four things we're just going to think about about his cry as we think about our forsaken King. Here's the first thing I want us to think about. Think about the who of the cry.

Who's crying out here? This is Jesus. That might seem really obvious, but think about that. This is Jesus. Think about who he is.

[11:45] He is God in the beginning. God eternal with the Father in the beginning. The second person of the Trinity. The one who flung stars into space. The one who sustains stars and planets.

The one who gives life and breath. The one who is giving us breath right now. And think about what he's done in his life. We've seen it in Luke's gospel, haven't we, for the last few weeks and months. What has he done with his life? He's healed people. He's wept with people. He's eaten with people. He's cared for people. He's loved people. He is the one who is truly perfect.

This is his cry. If there ever there was a person who shouldn't have cried out, forsaken, anguished, derelict, surely it was this man, Jesus Christ.

What's even more remarkable than that? Think about the way of the cry. This is Jesus. Where is he crying this from? He's crying it from the cross. The most brutal of execution methods reserved for the most brutal of criminals.

[12:53] Here it is. And get your heads around this one. Here is the creator being crucified by his creatures. Tis mystery all.

The immortal dies. Jesus, our king, wasn't killed heroically in battle. He is a king whose victory would be won by a quite humiliating death, an excruciating death, a cursed death.

He wouldn't die heroically surrounded by his friends. No, no. He would die, be crucified, surrounded by criminals in either side. This is our king, Jesus Christ.

Where is he crying this from? He's crying it from the cross. Thirdly, think about the what of the cry. Firstly, what is Jesus feeling on the cross as he lets out this cry?

What is he feeling? Well, look at the first few verses of the psalm. What does he feel? Firstly, he feels that God is distant.

[13:58] Verse 1, do you see the repetition of the word far? Not just far, but so far. Why are you so far from saving me? Why are you so far from my cry of anguish?

What is he saying? God, when I need you most in my hour of trial, you are not here. Jesus feels abandoned.

He feels rejected. Deserted. Turned upon. God seems distant. And secondly, do you see that he feels that God is silent? Verse 2, do you see it there?

I cry out by day and you do not answer. I cry out by night and I find no rest. God has seemingly turned his back on Jesus.

And Jesus' cry is seemingly falling on deaf ears. Now, we know in our own lives, don't we, the effect that affirming and assuring words can have on how you feel.

[15:00] Particularly, I think, don't we know it to be true, especially those of a parent. What do they say? Keep going. You're doing well. I love you. But do you notice how there are no affirming and assuring words here for Jesus from his Father?

And we've seen that, haven't we, in our series in Luke over the past while. The voice of his Father that had previously said about Jesus at his baptism, this is my Son in whom I am well pleased.

And we saw it with Paul a few weeks ago as we thought about his transfiguration. The voice from heaven, his Father that said, this is my Son. Listen to him. But now God's voice of comfort and assurance is nowhere to be heard.

Instead, there is silence. And if that is what Jesus is feeling on the cross, we've also got to ask, what is Jesus doing on the cross? I mean, is there any point to this death?

Has Jesus just got caught up in an ambush? Was he just in the wrong place at the wrong time? Well, what does Matthew tell us in those verses that we read earlier?

[16:13] That darkness fell across the whole land. And it did so for three hours. Darkness. Symbolic in the Bible for God's righteous judgment on people's sin.

And that darkness is now falling squarely on Jesus. Jesus takes the curse of God on himself. The punishment that sins deserved on himself.

The shut out of God's presence that people deserved, his people deserved. He is feeling it himself. This is our forsaken king as we look to the cross.

You know, John Stott would write this in his wonderful book, *The Cross of Christ*. In this moment, Jesus is quoting the only psalm that he can think of that describes what he is going through. This is our forsaken king. And fourthly and lastly, and I guess at what point we'll slow down just a little bit, is we need to think about the why of the cross.

[17:18] Thought about the who, thought about the what, thought about the where. Now we need to think about the why. What is going on? Well, I don't know if you were here a few weeks ago.

We had, Scott Hamilton was here. He was here preaching. Scott works for UCCF, the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship in Edinburgh. And he was telling us about his job, his day job. That means he gets to speak to students on the campuses around Edinburgh. He gets to speak to a whole lot of students from a whole lot of places about a whole lot of things, who believe a whole lot of things.

Now, I don't know if you picked up on what he said, but when he was here, we were just asking him a few questions. He said something that I thought was absolutely fascinating. He said that he, if you remember this, he said the more that he speaks to students, he is finding that the answers that an atheistic worldview is giving them are just not cutting it anymore.

Did you hear that when he said that? Fascinating. This guy, right in the thick of it, is finding that an atheistic worldview, that God is not there, God does not exist, that worldview is just not cutting it anymore.

[18:29] Remember there was an atheist bus campaign a few years ago down in London that ran with a slogan on the side of the buses, there's probably no God, now you can stop worrying and enjoy your life.

So there's an atheist worldview, a worldview that says God's non-existent. Now let me ask you, does that cut it for you?

As you think about your life, as you think about the world that you see out there, as you journey through life, the ups and downs, the trials, the test results, the truths that you know out there, but the truths that you know in your own heart, let me ask you again, does that worldview cut it for you? Well, here's what I want to suggest, and here's what I found to be true in my own life, that the cross offers us a worldview that makes sense, and it offers us a worldview that is beautiful.

And let me just leave you this morning with two reflections on Jesus' cry to think upon as you take them away from here. And as we move towards a close this morning, two reflections that I've thought about as I've been preparing for this this week, two reflections I want you to think about.

[19:47] Here's the first one. That should have been my cry. That should have been my cry. I know the sin inside myself.

I know what goes on in there. You know what goes on in there. I know that I am a broken person. I know that I am a sinful person.

Had I cried out to God and said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? God could quite justifiably have responded to me. I am shutting you out, Graham, because you are a rebel.

Because you say no to me and yes to yourself. I know the depths of your heart. I know that you are selfish. I know you say horrible things. I know your thoughts are bad.

I know you fail to live my way. I know you fail to honor me as God in your heart. Now I know that's true in my own life.

[20:46] I know that's true in my own life. And I know that's true in your lives. My real sin put a real man on a real cross.

And that real man really did pay the price for my sin. And that real man really has given me real life. This is our forsaken king.

Here's the second thought for you. That cry should have been my cry. But he made it his cry. How often don't we think of Jesus like Macbeth?

You read Macbeth at school. It's kind of part and parcel of being Scottish. Did you read Macbeth at school? What is he known as? The tragic hero. The tragic hero who started so well.

Who lived a decent life. But ended in a tragic ending. Now that's not what's happening on the cross. Jesus goes to the cross.

[21:48] He sets his face towards the cross. Jesus voluntarily gives himself over. He goes and he suffers on the cross. And do you notice it in the psalm verses 3 to 5.

In the midst of his suffering. In the middle of his abandonment and isolation. He clings to God. He clings to his father. Do you see that verses 3 to 5 of the psalm?

The language verses 1 and 2 is I. But the language of verses 3 and 5 is thou. If you like your KJV Old English. It goes from me to you.

What does Jesus say? He says. But God you are holy. God you are faithful. God you have an impeccable track record.

Of coming through for your people. When they need you. And you've proved it in the past. And I am so confident that you'll prove it again. As we read the reading that Tim read earlier.

[22 : 52] Where he entrusted himself to his father. What does Jesus know? He knows that in the midst of his suffering. That God is still God.

And he knows that God is still good. And even in this moment. That that is still true. And on a side note.

I think that is. I found that to be. As I thought about it this week. I found that to be massively comforting. Now think about it in your own life for a minute. When you're faced with suffering.

When times get hard. Do we not find ourselves asking that question sometimes? God where are you? How do I know that you're there? Do you see?

Do you know? Do you care? Well do you see that in Jesus. We have a wonderful example of what it looks like to trust God in suffering. That God does know.

[23 : 52] That God does see. That God does care. That God will vindicate his people. And he has a proven track record to back up that claim. And isn't it a wonderful thought this morning. And that's why we started our service with that great song.

Before the throne of God above. I have a strong and perfect plea. Is it not a wonderful truth this morning? That because of our Savior. Through him we have God's ear.

That he listens. That he cares. That he knows. But here as Jesus hangs. The salvation plan. That has been hatched.

By a loving Godhead before the world began. It is coming to its crescendo on the cross. This is no accident. This is the plan of the Godhead coming forth.

That God would make a way for sinful men and women. Broken men and women. To be reconciled to him. And to have life with him. The way that we were created to do.

[24 : 52] Because God so loved the world. That he gave his one and only son. That whoever believes in him will not perish. But will have eternal life.

Writer Douglas Copeland was asked what his greatest fear in life was. On how you'd answer that question. But he answered it. He said my greatest fear in life is that God exists.

But that he doesn't care very much for humans. Now surely as we look at our king on the cross. We know that that can't be true. What sent Jesus to the cross?

The love of God the Father. Jesus called. And God didn't answer. Jesus made himself the forsaken king.

Jesus tasted the darkness. The darkness that should have been mine. And because he tasted it. I can come and be welcomed into the light.

[25 : 59] Jesus was shut out. So that you and I can be welcomed in. And as we close our time in Psalm 22 this morning. Let me just tell you about some lyrics that I found this week.

And they're from an old hymn by John Newton. Now I don't know if you know anything about John Newton. That he was the famous Christian hymn writer and minister. Who had previously been a slave trader down in the south of England.

And his testimony is that his life underwent a quite miraculous transformation. And he went from being a slave trader to being an Anglican clergyman. A wonderful story.

He's the guy that was said to have most inspired Wilberforce in the work that he did. Anyway, John Newton. And probably most famous known for writing the hymn Amazing Grace. But I came across another hymn of his this week.

And let me just finish by reading these lyrics to you. Lyrics that I found to be so powerful this week. As I've reflected on my forsaken king.

[27 : 02] As he hung on the cross for me. And just listen to these. And read them if you want as well. To these lyrics that John Newton wrote. He said this as he contemplated Christ on the cross.

Thus, while his death my sin displays. In all its blackest hue. This old English for color. In all its blackest hue. Such is the mystery of grace.

It seals my pardon too. With pleasing grief. And mournful joy. My spirit now is filled. That I should such a life destroy.

Yet live by him I killed. Pleasing grief. And mournful joy. So we should feel as we contemplate Christ on the cross.

There is our forsaken king. The call this morning is to come to him. To receive life in him. Receive forgiveness in him. And to worship him. Jesus Christ.

[28 : 08] On the cross. Let me pray as we finish. Oh heavenly father. We thank you so much this morning Lord. That because Jesus was shut out.

That we could be welcomed in. That he was forsaken. So that we could be forgiven. That he tasted the darkness. So that we could be brought into the light.

Oh Lord would you help us to love him more. Would you help us to gaze upon the cross this week. And would you help us to live loving heavenly father.

Lives of worship to you this week we pray. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen.