

From Death to Glory

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[0 : 0 0] Well folks, it is wonderful to see you this morning. If you don't know me, my name is Alistair. I have the privilege of being the assistant pastor here and this week it has been my joy to spend my time in this wonderful psalm.

But let us pray together before we spend time in it. Let us pray. Father, as we turn now to contemplate what your word would say to us, what it would teach us and how it points us to Christ, would you be glorified with the words of my mouth and the meditations of our heart be pleasing to you, our wonderful rock and our great redeemer. In his name we pray. Amen.

Have you ever read a story or heard a story of immense suffering that has led you to tears, but ultimately ended in hope?

This week I read the story of a guy called Joe Kong, a Cambodian government official who had to flee for his life with his family from the Communist Party who were taking over Cambodia by force through torture and execution in the 1970s.

After immense difficulties and dangers, he managed to flee to Thailand with his family and escape certain death. Or maybe the well-known story of Corrie ten Boom, who was in a concentration camp in Nazi Germany because her and her family were smuggling Jews out of the Netherlands.

[1 : 3 5] In her book, *The Hiding Place*, she tells her life story and it is full of accounts of immense suffering and fears. Stories of her time in Ravensbrück concentration camp.

How so many people died and all the suffering that they endured, but the book also tells stories of hope and of freedom. Stories of people's experience of suffering have the ability to move us to tears, don't they?

To evoke in us an emotional response whereby we feel their pain and we cannot help but mourn with them. Well, that's what we're coming to this morning in Psalm 22.

Psalm 22 is all about the suffering of God's anointed one, the suffering of a servant king. Now, like every psalm in this short summer series, the initial focus of the psalm is on King David, the ancient king of Israel.

This psalm was written by David during a particularly difficult period in his life. Now, we don't know exactly when that was. We don't know exactly what was going on at this time or the suffering that he's referring to.

[2 : 5 4] But as you read this psalm, there are cries of pain and distress, suffering and sadness. He goes into great detail of the physical pain that he suffered and the emotional turmoil that he endured.

Psalm 22 is a very, very moving psalm. The psalms are poetry and should draw us in to feel the writer's pain, to journey with them.

They aren't academic essays that we can read and set to the side and think nothing of anymore. But they should evoke in us an emotional response whereby we resonate with the psalmist.

And many psalms also point forward beyond the time that they were written in, beyond the people that they were written by or about. That's why this short sermon series is called The King in All His Glory.

Because while Psalms 20 and 24 are written by or about King David, they ultimately point us forward to the true king. Jesus Christ, the ultimate. And they find their ultimate fulfillment in him.

[4 : 05] And this morning is no different. In Psalm 22, we see the suffering of God's anointed king. In David, yes. But ultimately, we see the suffering of the anointed true king, Jesus Christ.

Psalm 22 is quoted or alluded to 24 times in the New Testament. Mostly in the gospel accounts of the death of Jesus. But we wouldn't normally associate glory and death together, would we?

See, glory is most commonly associated with prestige, with power, with status, praise and honor. And death is normally seen as a bad thing.

An evil to be avoided. A topic that we hide away behind big cemetery walls. We do not want to think about it. But as we turn to Jesus, the ultimate suffering king, we see the king in all of his glory.

Because one of the most glorious things he did was die in the place of those who put their trust in him. He died for sins. That is the king in all of his glory.

[5 : 18] But that's me getting ahead of myself a little bit. Let's look at Psalm 22 together. Do keep it open in front of you. If you have a Bible. And let's think about the suffering of a servant king under two headings.

Forsaken and finished. So the first thing we see in this psalm is forsaken. In verses 1 to 21. Forsaken. And in these verses we get a detailed account of David's suffering.

His many laments and his many cries for help. Look with me at verse 1. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He feels completely abandoned.

Alone. In verse 2 he cries out to God but gets no answer. He finds no rest. In verse 6 this great king of Israel feels humiliated.

Insignificant like a worm wriggling in the mud. In verse 7 his enemies mock him and hurl insults at him. In verses 12 to 13 he uses the imagery of animals to describe his enemies.

[6 : 36] Bulls referring to strength. And lions referring to the danger that they present. His enemies are like a pack of dogs.

Verse 16. Encircling him. Waiting for that opportunity to pounce on him and unleash their final blow. And so look at how all of this makes him feel.

Read verses 14 to 15 with me. I am poured out like water. All my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax.

It has melted within me. My heart is dried up like a pot should. And my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You lay me in the dust of death.

He feels completely forsaken and depleted. He is so fearful that he says his heart melts like wax. It's as if all his courage and boldness has melted as he faces his suffering.

[7 : 40] Once a king of power. Prestige. Standing in some kind of glory. Now humiliated. Brought to nothing.

In the dust of death. And so it makes sense, doesn't it? That he cries in verse 1. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He feels abandoned.

He feels overwhelmed. He feels a deep sense of loss. But not from a goodbye or from the death of a loved one. As painful as those things are.

But he feels like this because he thinks or feels that God has intentionally forsaken him. It's as if he's a child who's been left standing at the side of a road by a mother who didn't want him anymore.

He feels like a defenseless infant. Unable to do anything to save himself. Now can you imagine his pain? But notice that even in his pain, even though he feels like he has been forsaken, there is still hope.

[8 : 51] Why? Because he continues to cry, my God. David's suffering hasn't changed his mind. He knows who God is.

He knows that God is his God. He's not crying to some distant, far off deity who doesn't care about him. But he's crying, my God. He still has faith.

And so that's why he cries and prays in verse 20. Deliver me. Rescue me, verse 21. Save me, verse 21. He prays all of those things because he knows who he is praying to.

He's praying to the God he trusts in. And the God that he still has faith in. My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me?

Now those words are probably most familiar to us as we hear them cried out by Jesus on the cross in Matthew 27, verse 46. This psalm's point about being forsaken is about David, yes.

[9 : 56] But it ultimately points us forward to the suffering of Jesus. Now we don't have time to do it now. I would love to, but we don't, I'm afraid. I would encourage you this afternoon or this week, find time and sit with two Bibles open in front of you.

One at Psalm 22 and another one open at Matthew 27 or John 19. And you will see how this psalm is the pattern of suffering, is the pattern of the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Jesus cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Now he didn't do that so that we can geek out on the connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

He didn't even do that in order to fulfill this passage or to make people think about this passage. Do you know why Jesus cried that out on the cross? Because that was his experience.

The Son of God felt forsaken by God as he hung on that cross. Psalm 22 is Jesus' experience.

[11 : 09] Look at a few of the verses. Verse 2. Verse 7.

Verse 7. In Psalm 22, verse 8.

In Matthew 27, verse 42.

The chief priests and teachers of the law look at Jesus, the Son of God, nailed to a cross. And this is what they say. He saved others, but he cannot save himself. He's the King of Israel.

Let him come down now from the cross and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him if he wants him. For he said, I am the Son of God. Are those not insults?

[12 : 16] Being hurled at the Son of God as he dies in our place? In Psalm 22, verse 16, it says, Dogs surround me.

A pack of villains encircle me. They pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display. People stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes and cast lots for my garment.

In Matthew 27, Jesus is surrounded by a crowd of soldiers. Beating him. Mocking him. All with the sole purpose of humiliating him.

Making him feel like a insignificant worm wriggling in the dust. Making him feel like nothing. And the disciples had fled for their lives.

A few of them stood off in a distance, but Jesus felt forsaken and alone. Soldiers divided his clothes among themselves.

[13 : 24] Nails were driven through his hands and his feet. As the physical aspects of the crucifixion are so evident from Psalm 22. Were they not? Bones on display, verse 17.

Humiliated, verse 6. Empty and devoid of all energy, verse 14. Thirsty and in pain, verse 15. Those are the physical aspects of the crucifixion.

But friends, the worst part of the crucifixion of Jesus was not the physical pain he endured. But it was the spiritual torment as he cried, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Because he felt forsaken by God. As Jesus hung on the cross, he bore the full weight of sin. Suffering the intense and just wrath of God against the sins of the world.

Darkness covered the sky from noon till three in the afternoon as a physical sign of the judgment of God. That was taking place as the holy, perfect, innocent, anointed king.

[14 : 36] Suffered and died in the place of sinners like you and like me. Jesus wasn't separated from God in nature or in substance.

He didn't cease to be God. That's important to know. But the intimacy of relationship between God and Son was somehow interrupted as he became sin for us.

Now I've been studying theology or I've studied theology in a formal setting for eight years. I've been a Christian for a good wee while now and I still cannot get my head around that. And I probably never will.

But even if we grasp it fully or not, Jesus felt abandoned and forsaken. And yet as we stand on this side of the cross, we understand that all of his suffering and forsakenness was not pointless, don't we?

As William Gilbert put so powerfully in his hymn, Wounded for me, wounded for me. There on the cross, he was wounded for me. Gone my transgressions, now I am free.

[15 : 43] All because Jesus was wounded for me. Friends, the wonderful truth of the good news of Jesus is that he was forsaken so that we could be made right with God.

He was forsaken so that we could be forgiven. He was abandoned so that we could be adopted into God's family.

He was forsaken so that we will never, ever be forsaken. Gone my transgressions. Now I am free.

All because Jesus was wounded for me. And because Jesus bore our punishment and the just wrath of God on the cross, that means we are free.

Free to live the life we were created to live. Free to be in perfect relationship and union with God. That's what this psalm is telling us as it points forward to Jesus.

[16 : 53] But this psalm also gives us words to express in our deepest pain and our deepest moments of suffering. See, we're tempted to think that it's wrong to ask the question, why, aren't we?

But look at Jesus in his darkest hour. He asked why. That doesn't mean that he doubted God's plan, but it was a genuine expression of how he felt as he was nailed to the cross.

Friends, in your suffering, use this psalm to express your pain. Cry out to God, but in all of your suffering, remember truth.

Because Jesus knew that the cross and death was not the end of his story. In your darkest moments of suffering and pain, the only place you can run and find ultimate comfort is God.

The only place you can actually find life is Jesus, the one who quite literally went through what is described in verses 12 to 18 on your behalf.

[18 : 06] The one who was pierced. The one who did thirst. The one who was beaten and mocked. The one who had insults hurled at him as he was dying for our transgressions.

And the comfort is, my friends, if you find yourself in those moments of mourning and loss, if you find yourself in pain and in suffering, you are not alone.

But for every Christian, Christ sits with you in that suffering. So maybe like David, you muster all the energy you have to cry out for help.

And you cry, deliver me, save me, rescue me. And do you know what Jesus responds? I already have my child. I already have.

All the suffering may not go, but I will never leave you nor forsake you. because I am with you now and to the very end of the age.

[19 : 20] Jesus is able to say that because his story did not end in death or on the cross, but in glorious victory as he was raised to life, defeating sin, defeating death.

Brothers and sisters, in your darkest hour, cling with your life to the cross of Jesus Christ. Cling to the one who took on immense suffering on your behalf.

Cry to him for help. Remember truth because he was forsaken so that you could be found. He was abandoned so that you could be adopted into the family of God.

And the second thing that we see in this psalm, or the second thing we see this psalm saying in verses 22 to 31 is, it is finished. It is finished. So thinking back to David and the initial meaning of this psalm, the tone completely changes in verse 22, doesn't it?

Previously, David has been giving petitions and laments, and he now shifts to thanksgiving and to praise. Look at verse 22 with me.

[20 : 36] I will declare your name to my people. In the assembly, I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him. All you descendants of Jacob, honor him, revere him, all you descendants of Israel.

David gathers with the Lord's people to praise and give thanks to God. But this isn't some kind of fake it till you make it attitude. Because verse 24 makes it clear that the Lord has listened to David's petitions.

And he has delivered him. Look at the end of verse 24 with me. He has not hidden his face from him, but has listened to his cry for help.

Now in these verses, there is both a local expression of praise in Israel because of what God has done in verses 22 to 26. But there's also a universal expression of praise in verses 27 to 31.

Read verse 27 with me. 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.

[21 : 50] Now there would have been partial fulfillment in this, as some people within the vicinity of Israel hear about what God has done for David, how he's delivered him and saved him.

And maybe they would have turned to God in repentance. But realistically, that news would not spread to the ends of the earth. Ultimately, this finds its fulfillment in Jesus, through whom the whole world will be blessed, as God promised back in the beginning of the Bible in Genesis chapter 12 to Abraham.

That through Jesus, people will be added to the kingdom, people from every tribe and tongue and nation. And what will they do on that final day? Gather around the throne and worship Jesus.

That is a future event, but that is still happening now. As the gospel goes out, people are turning from their sin, putting their trust in Jesus, and celebrating the God who has delivered, the God who has finished the work of salvation.

See, the psalm begins in verse 1 with, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Words uttered by Jesus on the cross, as he bore the weight of the sins of the world.

[23 : 14] So that all those who trust in him can be forgiven, and in a right relationship with God. But then the psalm ends in verse 31. They, that's the future generations, will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn, he has done it.

Now there's a sense of finality in those last words, aren't there? As David is pointing forward to a future day, to a future suffering king, the ultimate suffering king, who in John chapter 19, after having hung on the cross, declared boldly and finally, it is finished.

The wages of sin, for all those who trust in Jesus, paid for. The guilty punishment of God's wrath, laid on him instead of us.

The great exchange complete, as the innocent one, takes the place of us, the guilty. Brothers and sisters, it is finished. Jesus, the ultimate suffering king, has won, and his work is done.

That is the news, that this whole world needs to hear. Of the king, who left his place of glory. Who suffered immensely, and died in our place, so that sinners like us, could be forgiven.

[24 : 43] If you're not a Christian here this morning, please, investigate this. Do not let another day go by, where you do not consider, the significance of the son of God, dying in your place, and being raised to life.

He offers, forgiveness and freedom, to live under the ultimate king, who suffered in your place. Will you listen to his call this morning? I think back to where we started off.

There are many stories, in this world, that will bring tears to our eyes, as we hear of the suffering, of many people. But the greatest story, that this world has ever seen, the greatest story, that this world, needs to hear, is the story, of the king in all his glory.

The suffering king, who felt forsaken, and yet who declared, that his work is finished, at the cross. That is Jesus, in all of his glory.

Because as the suffering king, he endured God's wrath, in our place, so that even when we do suffer, we can be confident, that the ultimate work of deliverance, has been finished, on the cross by him.

[26 : 05] Look at the suffering king, in all of his glory. Friends, the only right response, to him, is to turn from your sin, to put your trust, in Jesus, and say thank you.

Let us do that now. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you, that we can, look at your word, and we see, your grand plan, of salvation.

That from the very beginning, of time, when sin entered this world, you promised, that you would send, the one who would defeat sin, who would defeat death. And Jesus, we thank you, that you willingly, took our place.

Wounded for me. Gone my transgressions, and now I am free, all because Jesus, you were wounded for me. Father, forgive us for the times, where we forget, what a marvelous, salvation you've given, us through Jesus.

Holy Spirit, we thank you, that you've opened our eyes, to see that truth, and we pray, that if we do not yet, know that truth, of forgiveness, and union with you, that by your spirit, you would do a work, in our hearts right now.

[27 : 23] Father, that we would leave here, a people who are forgiven, and made right with you. A people who go, with that glorious news, of salvation, to a world, that is dying without you.

And Jesus, we come before you, and all the words, in the world, and all the languages, in the world, nothing is enough, to express, how grateful we are, Jesus, thank you.

Amen.