

Psalm 22:12-21

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. Are we well? Good. Well, let's pray together as we come to God's word. Oh, Father, we thank you so much this morning that we come here.

As we've been singing, we do not worship a dead God. We do not worship a man whose body can be found somewhere if you dig up a grave in the Middle East.

But we thank you that we worship and we know you who are the living God. You who are the speaking God. And Father, as we come to your word now, as we come to this psalm that we've been thinking about the last wee while.

Lord, we ask that you would teach us. We ask that you would encourage us. We ask that you would challenge us. We ask that you would convict us. We ask that you would sharpen us and mold us all for the glory of your son, Jesus Christ.

And it's in his name that we pray confidently. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, you up for learning a new word this morning? Yeah.

[1 : 0 7] Here is the word that I learned recently. An ultra-crepidarian. Has anyone heard of this word? One person has heard of this word.

So I'm not getting away if I'm making this up. You will correct me. An ultra-crepidarian is somebody who offers advice. Now, I wonder how you rate your advice-giving skills.

Do you have any agony ants in the room? Do we have any people who really rate their ability to offer advice to people? Well, let me tell you the story of a man I was reading about this week called Joseph.

And Joseph is a Maasai warrior in Africa. Joseph hears about Jesus. Becomes a Christian. Inexpressible joy and excitement fill his heart.

So what does he do? Naturally, he travels around the surrounding villages that surround his. He tells everyone he meets about this man, Jesus, who has transformed his life.

[2 : 0 8] What does he expect to see? He expects to see their faces light up the same way that his did. So what does he see?

Well, he sees not faces lit up. He sees faces full of anger. And the people, as you listen to what Joseph has to say, they turn violent.

The men of the village, they pin him down. The women of the village, they take barbed wire and they beat him. And they throw him out of the village. And Joseph is sitting there thinking, I mustn't have told them right about Jesus.

So what does he do? He goes back into the village. And he starts speaking again. And the same thing happens to him. And the wounds that started to heal, all of a sudden are reopened again.

Once again, he's thrown out of the village for speaking about Jesus. So here's what I want you to imagine this morning. Picture him. He's outside the village.

[3 : 1 3] Battered. Bruised. Perplexed. Distressed. And he turns to you. Looked you in the eye. And he says, what should I do?

So now that we're all confessing ultra-crepidarians, how would you advise Joseph? What do you say to somebody who's feeling the heat and is facing the flames because of their trust in God?

Now, I imagine for many of us here this morning, that is a very real question. And I imagine for many of us here this morning, it's a very raw question. What do you say to somebody who's knowing the reality of suffering in their lives?

Well, here's what I love about the Bible. It doesn't shy away from telling me about the suffering in human life. Here's what I also love about the Bible.

It tells me about a man. It tells me about a man who knows what the realness and the rawness of faith in God is like. It tells me about a suffering king.

[4 : 21] Psalm 22. We've been in it the last few weeks. Psalm 22. We meet a king. And as Paul read it there, you'll have read it and seen it. A king who is feeling the heat and a king who is facing the flames because he trusts in God.

Now, I just want us to see two very quick things this morning about these verses. I think these verses present us, and if you have Psalm 22 there, get it in front of you, these verses.

Because I think this is massively important for us this morning. Two great realities for the suffering Christian that these verses give us. Two great realities.

You ready for these two realities? Yeah? Show me some enthusiasm. Right? We're good. Here's the first reality. That there is a world that stands against you.

Now, we live in a world, don't we, that is hostile to God. And because of that, we live in a world that is hostile to his people. And that's what David is experiencing in our verses in Psalm 22.

[5 : 26] What does he describe? Look at it there. Scan your eyes over verses 6 to 8 and verses 12 to 17. What does he describe?

Firstly, he describes the faces that surround him. Do you see that? How does he describe these people? Well, look at the language that he uses. He uses beastly language.

Do you see that? A lot of animals he mentions. Strong bulls. Roaring lions. A pack of dogs. Now, I don't know if you've ever been to Africa or the third world.

And you've seen packs of dogs. This is not Butsi the Chihuahua. Right? These are flea-carrying dogs who are out to get him. These are not domesticated pets that David is rhyming off here.

These are animals who are out to kill him. This is like that moment in the David Attenborough documentaries that you've probably seen on BBC 2 the last few days.

[6 : 24] You can tell I've been on holiday. Like the wildebeest when he spots the hunter in the long grass. What does he do? He legs it out of there. They tear their prey. Look what he's saying.

They open their mouths. And these animals, these people, they surround him at every side. Do you see that? And their faces don't just surround him.

Actually, their hands are on him. They've got him. They pierce him. They mock him. They scoff at him. They insult him.

They stare at him. They gloat at him. They strip him. And how does David feel? He feels like a worm. So small.

So fragile. So powerless. And if he uses beastly language to describe those surround him, do you see how he uses bodily language to describe how he is feeling? His heart.

[7 : 20] Like wax melting within him. Do you feel the pain? His mouth, it's dry. His tongue sticking to the roof of his mouth.

His bones are on display. Here is a world that stands against this king. Now, of course, if David is using this language somewhat hyperbolically here, Jesus, as he endures the cross, well, he is certainly not.

His face, his face was targeted. His side was literally pierced. His name was, it was mocked.

His trust in God, it was ridiculed. He was slapped. Get your head around that. There was a human being who slapped God. His body was broken.

His garments were divided. His life was taken. And the faces that surrounded him, well, their hands were well and truly on Jesus Christ.

[8 : 20] Now, why? Why? I don't know if you remember ever watching a few years ago the film that came out, The Passion of the Christ. This film that was directed by Mel Gibson.

Well, I learned an interesting fact recently about the film. That Gibson, he only appears in one scene in that film. One scene.

His are the hands that hold the nail, that drive, hold the hammer, that drive the nail into Jesus' hands. And it was Gibson, in a way, saying, listen, I wasn't there that day.

I wasn't there that day. But in another sense, I absolutely was there that day. My sins put him there. He took the punishment that I deserve.

That's what Gibson knew to be true in his own life. And that's what's true for all of us here this morning. We were not there. We were not there. But in another sense, we absolutely were there.

[9 : 27] For he was wounded for our transgressions, writes Isaiah. Isaiah, he was crushed for our iniquities. And with his stripes, we are healed.

Now, as we contemplate Christ on the cross this morning, I think there are two wonderful lessons for us to learn as a church family, as we look at him.

Here's the first lesson. Lesson number one from the cross. To take heed of the example that Jesus shows us. Now, you can imagine that David was powerless to do much about his situation.

But Jesus, well, he definitely wasn't powerless to do much about his situation. What did Jesus say to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane? When Judas comes and betrays him, what do the disciples want?

Well, they want to fight. They want a scrap, understandably. I don't know if you've ever watched, but I'm sure you have, the Lord of the Rings films. Some of my favorite scenes are when Gandalf, he gets his stick.

[10 : 39] And what does he do? He just hammers it on the ground. And his enemies just get flung. So great is the power that's unleashed. He does. He smashes those who are opposing him.

Well, if I were advising Jesus here, that's what I would have told him to do. But what does he say to his disciples? Put your swords away. put them away do you not think that I could appeal to God and he would send down 12 legions of armies do you think I could play that card at any second if I wanted to but the plan of God would not be fulfilled and so what do we see him do we see him go to the soldier whose ear has been cut off and what does he do he heals him Jesus thoughts in that moment of betrayal are not on returning evil they're on doing good they're not on retribution not on retaliation but they're on restoration with that mindset he goes to the cross and he lays down his life for the very ones who are trying to kill him and do kill him this is our enemy loving king now we love talking about leadership in our culture don't we I don't know if you've ever been into to water zones recently but you look it's just shelves and shelves full of leadership books how to be the best leader you can be we love them don't we we love Steve Jobs we love Alex Ferguson we love Winston Churchill but what is the greatest mark of a great leader surely it's to not ask something of others that you would not be prepared to do yourself so do you see that there is no leader quite like Jesus Christ he truly is in a league of his own he truly is incomparable he is well and truly head and shoulders above any man that I've ever heard of for he who said turn the other cheek let's people hammer in the nails he who said love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you he died for his enemies now we may never plumb the depths of this psalm in terms of our suffering and our persecution but we still face don't we as God's people we still face little fires in our lives we can call them that when those in the office when they ostracize you for being different when those at university they they look on you differently because you will not join in the drinking games when you was at school they bully bully you for standing and declaring your faith in Jesus Christ well what would the cross say to us this morning it would say pray for them and love them and tell them you see this is the pattern that we see at the cross and in case we were in any doubt as to what it means to follow Jesus Christ do you see here that to follow him the pattern is very much cross shaped so there's lesson number one from the cross to heed the example that Jesus shows us but here's lesson number two from the cross to take heart from the truth that Jesus knows us right at the heart of the Christian faith is a God who has suffered that Jesus is not immune from the pain he got involved in our darkness he tasted death and he knows what it means to be targeted because one trusts in God but it's more than that do you remember when you were young and you used to have an imaginary friend no me neither well Jesus

is no imaginary friend he is no distant sympathizer he is no removed empathizer here is a king who we can call our brother and our king has sent his spirit to dwell in the lives of his people not as a casual dweller but as a permanent occupier to live inside of us and to help us and where is Jesus now well he's at the right hand of God praying for us isn't it a wonderful truth for us to grasp this morning that Jesus is more committed to his sheep than his sheep are to him that Jesus is more committed to praying for me than I am to praying for me I find that in my own prayer life that I'm praying for people praying for things so what happens Lord would you bless David would you look after him would you surround him with your peace so that reminds me

I need to meet David this week I wonder where we can meet maybe we can go to Starbucks they're doing that new vanilla latte do you not find that in your prayer life is it not incredible to think that Jesus is more committed to prayer than I am that Jesus is more committed to me as his sheep than I am to him that I get tired my concentration drifts but Jesus never ceases to pray at the right hand of the Father for his people and as we think on the blessed truth of our praying saviour his ceaseless fervent impassioned hearty intercession on our behalf that should drive us to love him more Robert Marnie McShane one of Scotland's finest preachers preachers he said this if I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room oh I would not fear a million enemies yet distance makes no difference for he is praying for me oh that should massively comfort us this morning that should massively inspire us this morning as we live our lives following this king in a world that stands against us for in Jesus Christ do you see friends that we do not have we could not ask for a better king as we return to the psalm in the midst of the suffering see what David is doing this is the second big thing for us to know this morning the second big reality for the suffering Christian that there may be a world that stands against you but know that there is a God who stands beside you now just cast your eyes over these verses here look firstly at what David is declaring do you see it there in those verses what is he declaring that God is my strength

God you are my strength and he's not picturing God as some kind of divine Duracell bunny God is not some triple A after his name who will zap him with power he's reminding himself of God's absolute sovereignty that God is in total control of his life that God holds his times in the palms of his hands do you see the language here that God is the one who has nursed him from the womb that God is the one who has given him every heartbeat such intimate language as if to say God there has never been a moment where you've not been there so a personal note I found that so comforting this week to know that God holds my family's life in his hands just as much as he does my hand that nothing is happening that he does not know about nothing is happening that he's not in control over he holds our life in his hand words that I found so massively reassuring this week and I wrote them about six times to know

[19:12] I wouldn't cry but you see what he's declaring here that God is in control of his life that he trusts that God is good and he trusts that God has a purpose and a plan for his life he's trusting in God's total ability to provide everything that he needs and his people need in their time of trial he's throwing himself on that truth that God you are sustaining me God you hold my life in the palm of your hand George Whitefield American evangelist back in the day famously said I am immortal until God calls me home that God holds our lives in his hands now where has David got that idea from I wonder where has he got that from well he's got it from God's proven track record he knows God is a faithful God he knows that God is a God of abundant goodness and so what does he declare God you are my strength and if that's what David is declaring notice secondly what he is praying that God would save him look at the words he uses in verses 19 to 21 what does he pray help me save me deliver me rescue me he knows that he needs God's help as I was preparing and I was thinking about this passage over the last few weeks it got me thinking how can we use this prayer in our lives as a church how can we use this prayer in the lives of our lives as

God's people now it occurred to me that we might never experience the depths of this this cry it might never be mine these words they might never be mine but how many of our brothers and sisters around the world face this as a daily reality they know physical suffering they know what it means to be beaten they know what it means to be spat at they know what it means to be mocked I don't know about you but I find that one of the hardest things in my own prayer times to raise my eyes to lift my mind to things above just me and mine how often do I just never think about my brothers and sisters in Christ as they suffer for their faith in the other side of the world for that's the truth isn't it that the same spirit of God that lives in me is the same spirit of God that lives in my brother and sister in North Korea one of the things that we've tried to do practically in our small group as we meet is to pray for the unreached people groups in the world and to pray for the persecuted church what we do is we've only been doing it the last couple of meets but someone will go away and will research a persecuted country in the world they will research it bring it to the group and they'll lead us in praying for the country well last time we met

Sarah who's not here this morning so I won't embarrass her she was telling us about the church in India the last year I'll just read this out to you it was estimated that 15 Christians were attacked every week because of their faith in Jesus Christ she was telling us about a new Hindu government which is in India who are seeking to make it statewide illegal to convert from Hinduism to any other religion and you can imagine if you're a Hindu and you come to faith in Christ that's going to lead to immense problems in your life and that's going to lead to immense suffering not just from the state but also from your family as well and it was a sobering privilege to sit there as a group of believers in Edinburgh and not only to identify with believers in India but to pray for them and to pray what?

Well that they would know God as their strength and that they would know him as an ever-present help in time of need and that God by his grace and in his mercy would stand over them and protect them as his people and wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to become part of our DNA as a church community that we pray for our brothers and sisters around the world that we pray for our area that we pray for our nation that we pray for our world now you're probably thinking how do I do that where do I start well just printed off this morning Adam printed a ton of them off the world watch list that's produced by Open Doors you can grab it on the way out before you go this morning and it lists the 50 hardest places to be a Christian and the thing is I read this this week is not only did I know and this was to my shame not only did I not know that some of these countries would be on this list but I didn't even know some of these countries existed let's get praying for our brothers and sisters who know the trials and who know the flames because of their trust in God this is the pattern of our persecuted and pierced king but as we return to the psalm this morning just as we finish off

I wonder how you square the circle that David was delivered from death but Jesus Christ the true king of psalm 22 was not delivered from death how do you make sense of that one let me take you back just to the word that we were thinking about earlier on an ultra crepidarian now I'll be honest I was a little bit cheeky there and I only gave you half of its definition Calum am I right I'm right actually an ultra crepidarian is somebody who offers advice but it's someone who offers advice not knowing the full wisdom of the picture let me take you back to Joseph picture him outside that village bruised perplexed distressed battered looks to you what should I do well here's how I would have advised him run a mile mate head down coat on chin up ship out here's what happened to him he goes back into the village and he speaks and this time people attacked him before he even had a chance to open his mouth and it's recorded his testimony is that before he felt unconscious the last thing he remembers hearing is a woman crying and he wakes up and he was in his own bed and the same people who were trying to attack him are now standing over him and weeping and trying to nurse him back to life now why well because

[26 : 12] God had used Joseph's life to convert the entire village to Christ I find it sobering to know that God's ways are higher than my ways I find it humbling to know that God's wisdom is not my wisdom I find it so encouraging to know that God's plan is better than my plan I find it so awesome to know that his purposes are unstoppable for his glory and so sovereign and good is our God that he uses man's worst and he turns it into his best do we not know that so beautifully as we look at the cross here is a king over whom the world shouted defeated but in actual fact here was a king's death that shouted victory here is a God whose plans appeared to be thwarted but in actual fact here is a God who is gloriously accomplishing his plans did you remember I said a few weeks ago when we started this psalm that it moves from the minor key to the major key well as we hit the end of verse 21 we've hit the lowest note in the minor key verse 22 we'll see next week a massive key change and what we're going to see over the next few weeks is that God will use this apparent moment of defeat to gather people from around the world men and women boys and girls throughout the generations all those who look on the sun will have life in his name

God will use this moment of defeat apparent defeat to accomplish his greatest victory the apostle Paul let's end with these words Romans 11 oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways for who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid for from him and through him and to him are all things to him be glory forever amen well just before we close here's what I want to do this morning I'd love us to pray in response to some of the things that we've seen I'm just going to ask three people if I'm right I'm thinking Fiona Andy and Ali who are just going to come up and they're going to lead us in three quick short prayers for some of the things we've been looking at to give thanks for our victorious king to pray for us as a church as we stand in this world that stands against us and to pray for our brothers and sisters around the world who are really feeling the heat and facing the flames because of their trust in Christ so guys you want to come up let's pray together our father we thank you that Jesus blood has washed away our sins we thank you that your wrath is completely satisfied we thank you that though we were your enemies now we're seated at your table oh death where is your sting our resurrected king has rendered you defeated and we sing hallelujah the lamb is on the throne he is risen he is alive and we thank you father amen lord we just thank you for the immense privilege it is to be part of your church we thank you for the immense privilege it is to have been purchased by your son's precious blood thank you for the unbelievable joy of being adopted into your family as sons and daughters of christ and we just pray that you would use this lord that you would use the gifts that we would use the gifts that you've given to us lord that we wouldn't hide them away that we would have a real heart for others lord a heart for reaching out beyond this place lord into a city that is so often filled with despair lord with sin and with a rejection of you lord we pray that we would have a real heart as a church together to take your message of reconciliation out of this building lord and into the city we pray that as a church we would know real fellowship lord that we would support each other and care for each other lord that we would really show each other love in our lives and lord we just pray that we would fully rely on you for everything that everything that is done here would be done for your glory and for the glory of your name amen heavenly father we want to pray for the church across the world lord where persecution is horrendous we want to pray for the church in

Syria where criminal christians have been displaced and put into camps we want to pray that their wisdom and their life will shine out for you lord we want to pray for India we want to pray for this new government we want to pray for the prime minister there that he would soften his heart and that he would let the church be able to thrive there and grow we do thank you for things that are happening we thank you in China your church is growing very strong indeed lord we thank you for that the government there is quite scared about that we want to pray for some parts of Africa where your church is really growing lord but we want to ask lord that you will be with your people today and may them remember even through death death has lost its sting there is no victory in death because Jesus Christ you came here and you died and you was again defeating death once and for all in Jesus name amen thanks to and little right we we we we we we and we