

A Cry of Anguish & Song of Praise

Focusing Our Hearts on the Lord's Supper (Psalm 22)

Baxter T. Exum (#1755)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
October 13, 2024



Good morning and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! If you are visiting with us today, we are especially happy to have you with us, and we hope that you are encouraged by your visit. We'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card – either online or on a card from the pew in front of you. And we also invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns in that way.

We are here this morning to preach the good news. God loves us and sent his Son to save us from sin. He died on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up on the first day of the week. We obey this good news through faith, repentance, confession of our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and then by allowing ourselves to be buried with the Lord in baptism (an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins). And this morning we are sharing some good news that comes to us through Natalia, who lives in Kyiv, Ukraine. She posted earlier this week, and as translated by Facebook she says, "Today in our spiritual family addition - a spiritual birthday! Zoe and Valentina believed, repented and were baptized for the forgiveness of sins! We rejoiced with them today and we know Heaven also triumphed seeing these souls saved. Unfortunately, the war has brought these sisters a lot of grief. But today there were tears of joy in their eyes, of joy from victory in Christ." I love these two pictures, but I love this picture as well! It looks like they are getting together for a fellowship dinner after worship. We can hardly imagine what the church in Kyiv has been through over the past few years, but God's people encourage each other.

This next one comes to us from Brian Kenyon, a friend and former classmate from Freed-Hardeman who now directs the Florida School of Preaching down in Lakeland, Florida. They took a direct hit from the hurricane this week, but not before baptizing Rosetta. Right before the storm came through, they posted and said, "Welcome, Rosetta, to the family of God! Praise to the Lord!" And in one of the comments, Brian went on to say that, "Her conversion was made possible, in large part, due to [our congregation's] online presence. God has blessed us! Shout out to Jason and our tech team! Keep up the good work, and 'be not weary in well doing!'" And that reminds us to be thankful for our tech team here at Four Lakes. These guys got everything upgraded just a few months before COVID hit, and the livestream has been a huge blessing to many (both on YouTube as well as on phone), and we are thankful for the work they continue to do.

As you might have noticed already, we are doing something a little bit different this morning. We'd like to take some time to focus our hearts on the Lord's Supper. And we plan on doing this by revisiting a Psalm written by

King David, a Psalm that is quoted by Jesus on the cross, and a Psalm that is actually a much more graphic description of the Lord's death than all of the four gospel accounts combined. And that's amazing, because the Psalm was written roughly a thousand years before the crucifixion. We looked at this Psalm back in 2019 (in a three-part series), but it came up again due to a conversation I had with our daughter a month or two ago. From time to time I will call her on a Sunday afternoon to check in and to see what she learned in worship that day, and a month or so ago she mentioned Psalm 22, she mentioned our study here at Four Lakes a few years ago, and she said something about wishing that we could perhaps study that Psalm again with reference to the Lord's Supper. So, that's what we plan on doing this morning.

Caleb has agreed to lead us in number of songs today, all tied to the Lord's Supper and interspersed with our study of Psalm 22, and then we'll partake of the Lord's Supper toward the end of today's service. So, as we think about the Lord's death on the cross, as we remember what he did for us, let's start today by singing,

Tell Me the Story of Jesus (#622)

I would invite you to be turning with me to Psalm 22, and as we make our way to Psalm 22, I hope we notice the heading. In the NASB, the heading says, *"For the choir director; upon Aijeleth Hashshahar. A Psalm of David."* And we have a footnote indicating that the song is to be sung to the tune of "Deer of the Morning." We know that David was a hunter, you often hunt deer in the morning, and so the idea is that the tune of this song would be somewhat ominous, perhaps similar to the theme from Jaws or maybe the Imperial March from Star Wars, something ominous. Well, some have suggested something similar for Psalm 22, that the music itself was dark and foreboding. And the reason is: Psalm 22 is a lament, a song of intense sorrow, a song expressing unimaginable pain.

And although these words were first written by King David, when we look at what he's written, it's obvious that these words go far beyond anything that King David experienced personally. These words describe the crucifixion, a thousand years before it happens. Back then, people were stoned to death, but in Psalm 22 we read about hands and feet being pierced, and extreme thirst, and bones being pulled out of joint, we have the mocking from the crowd, and we even have a seemingly random reference to clothing being gambled away. Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of this, and in fact, Jesus quotes the opening line as he is hanging on the cross.

Many of the religious leaders would have memorized Psalm 22, the Psalms weren't numbered like we have them today, and so it is possible that Jesus quotes the opening line as a way of trying to get them to think about it. It was perhaps the Lord's way of saying (from the cross), "Please turn with me to Psalm 22." And we can hardly imagine what that must have been like for an honest-hearted observer to be thinking about Psalm 22 while watching what was happening on the cross. It would have been a play-by-play description written a thousand years beforehand. It's no wonder why so many of the religious leaders would go on to have a change of heart and obey the gospel.

So, let's start this morning with the first 10 verses of Psalm 22, as we try to focus our thoughts on the Lord's death this morning – Psalm 22:1-10,

- 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.*

As the heading suggests, what we have here is an UNANSWERED CRY, *“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”* Of all the words Jesus spoke from the cross, this is certainly the most difficult to understand. Volumes have been written trying to explain what Jesus is saying here. Was Jesus literally forsaken by his Father, or did he just feel forsaken? I don’t know. What we do know is that Jesus begged his father to let this cup pass. All night long on the night before his death, he prays, asking his Father to find some other way. We don’t have an answer in scripture, other than the fact that Jesus went to the cross. So, at the very least, Jesus certainly FELT some kind of distance or break in that relationship. At the worst, his own Father turned his face away, as Jesus took on the punishment for every sin that’s ever been committed.

But in spite of this apparent gap in the relationship, let’s not miss that the author still calls out to God, *“My God, my God!”* He cries out to God, and God is apparently silent, but I want us to notice that he still says (in spite of the silence), *“Yet, you are holy...”* (in verse 3). So, even though he feels desperate and far away, he still knows that God is holy, that God is still God. In verse 4, he is a God who has delivered his people in the past. In other words, “You may not be answering me right now, but I still believe that you are a God who answers.”

In verse 5, he turns back to his desperation, *“But I am a worm and not a man.”* This treatment he receives on the cross is beyond what we would even do to an animal. But the Romans had a goal of making each execution as horrific as possible. They were making a statement. Their goal was to make an example, and the message was, “Don’t do what this guy did.” And when this happened to the Lord, he became as *“a worm and not a man.”* The cross was dehumanizing. The cross was the definition of “cruel and unusual punishment.” It was both cruel and unusual.

He goes on to talk about how he is despised, and rejected, and harassed by the people. And this isn’t this exactly what happens at the crucifixion? In fact, in verse 8, we have a direct quote, *“commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him.”* Isn’t that what the people were saying to Jesus in Matthew 27:43, as they passed by? In fact, it’s almost as if they were reading this from the Psalms! And the mocking is relentless. In a few moments, we plan on singing, “How Deep the Father’s Love,” because in that song, we sing to each other, “Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders; Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.” Part of the torment Jesus endured came from those who made fun of him as he died, and in some sense we were in that crowd.

But then, in verse 9, we get to another, **“yet.”** Even though he’s being mocked and tormented and harassed and abandoned by God, he says, **“Yet you are he who brought me forth from the womb.”** So, he feels distant at the moment, but he knows that God has been with him in the past. So, he continues crying out to God for help.

Now, there’s a practical lesson here in that even when we feel distant from God, even when we feel abused and neglected by God, there’s a value in continuing to call out. We may not hear him NOW, but we know from previous experience that God is a God who answers, “You are a God who has rescued me in the past.” It’s a rather negative passage, but we’re reminded that God is certainly big enough to handle whatever we may unload on him in prayer.

But, our focus here is the Lord’s Supper, remembering what Jesus went through for us. He called out to God for help, and for at least a time, God appeared was silent. At this time, Caleb will lead us in two songs, and then we’ll continue with the next paragraph. And by the way, when we sing about “Ebon Pinion” in just a moment, let’s remember that means “black wing.” It’s a picture of darkness. It’s one of those songs (like Psalm 22) with a scary tune. Let’s sing together...

Night With Ebon Pinion (#452)
How Deep the Father’s Love (BCBC #21)

Let’s continue by looking at Psalm 22:11-21 as we focus in on the UNIMAGINABLE ANGUISH of the cross. He says,

- 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.

Starting in verse 11, the emphasis here is on being not just in anguish, but alone. He calls out to God again, ***“Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.”*** Nobody is rescuing the Lord from this terrifying scenario. In fact, he is surrounded by the ***“bulls of Bashan.”*** He is surrounded by his enemies. We don’t like being surrounded by enemies. But here, Jesus is completely surrounded. I think back to driving through Theodore Roosevelt National Park just before sunrise several years ago, and driving through a giant herd of bison. I had to pass through, so I drove as far as I could and then parked in the middle of the road. Those bison slowly surrounded my car as they passed by. On both sides, I could have reached out my open windows, and touched these huge creatures, on both sides at the same time – huge eyeballs, huge horns, huge tongues hanging out, steam coming from their huge nostrils – and these huge creatures could have completely crushed me and my car if they wanted to do so. Completely surrounded. It was a bit like driving through the UW campus! But, to me, that’s what we see in verse 12, King David (and ultimately Jesus) is surrounded by his enemies. Jesus, of course, is surrounded by the Roman soldiers on all sides, and he is completely exposed to these men who fully intend to end his life. They open their mouths like ravenous and roaring lions. Lions are predators, out for blood.

In verse 14, in terms of suffering, the Psalm says, ***“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within me.”*** So, he’s tired, he’s tortured, his heart is melted like wax. I’ve put an article in the cubbyholes this morning, a reprint from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* back in the mid 1980’s. So, it’s dated, and it is rather graphic (with some medical-type drawings), but it’s written by a medical doctor and a religious scholar who got together to try to analyze the cause of death from a typical Roman crucifixion in the First Century, pulling from history as well as the Biblical text. I’ll let you read it on your own if you’re interested, but the cause of death (as I understand it) was often heart failure. Or, as David said, his heart is melted like wax. We think about what the Lord went through: spending all night in prayer with no sleep, being betrayed by a close friend, dragged from one trial to another in the wee hours in the morning, beaten and slapped and spit upon along the way, having a crown of thorns beaten down onto his head, forced to carry his own cross and collapsing under the weight of it, nailed to that cross, and then hanging there exposed for six hours.

In verse 15, his strength is dried up like an old scrap of broken pottery. His tongue sticks to the roof of his mouth. In verse 16, instead of being surrounded by bulls and lions, he is now surrounded by ***“dogs,”*** by a ***“band of evildoers.”*** They have ***“pierced his hands and feet.”*** In verse 17, he seems to be looking at his own bones. I don’t think I’ve ever seen one of my own bones. Maybe some of you have seen one of your own bones. I don’t know, but I’m thinking that can’t be good! If I find myself looking at one of my own bones, something terrible has happened. That article I mentioned earlier suggests that the scourge from a Roman scourging would often wrap around the body and open the flesh to the point of exposing the ribs. It’s possible, then, that this passage was fulfilled quite literally as Jesus on the cross looked down and could see his own bones. His bones were staring back at him.

And then, in verse 18, some of those men around the cross divided up his garments among them, casting lots for his clothing. We talk about “adding insult to injury.” Can we imagine how humiliating this must have been? How frustrating? How final? To have the only thing you own to be argued over and divided up as you are right there watching it happen? Years and years ago, my wife and I went to visit a dying woman, and as she was there in her bed taking her final breaths, her children and in-laws were standing around the room arguing and discussing what to do with her house and her property. All the while, the smoke alarm was chirping every minute or so with a low battery alarm. Can you imagine how painful that must have been, to have this

constant annoyance, and then to have your stuff divided up right in front of you as you are lying there gasping for air? But isn't that what happens to the Lord? He went through this for us.

And in the middle of it, he makes a request (in verses 19-21), asking God to be nearby, asking God to deliver him from death. Let's sing two more songs and then we'll look at the rest of the chapter.

**Hallelujah! What a Savior! (#203)
In Christ Alone (BCBC #50)**

All of this brings us to the rest of the chapter, and I want us to notice that verse 22 is a turning point. He's been asking for help, and now, something changes. It's as if God has answered his prayer. And we know that God answers the crucifixion with the resurrection, and I think that's what we see starting in verse 22. From this point forward, the message is: God is worthy of our praise and he is worthy of proclaiming! We have a message to share. I'm thinking of the song, "Low in the Grave He Lay." That is one slow and sad song, isn't it? Until we get to the chorus! At that point, the song changes, "Up from the grave He arose!" When my wife was growing up, she thought the song said, "Up from the grave with a hose!" But that's not it! Sadness, sadness, sadness, and then, "Up from the grave he arose!" Let's look at the praise part of this Psalm – Psalm 22:22-31,

- 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.*

We won't go through this line-by-line, but I just hope we see a shift here. We go from the "unanswered cry" and "unimaginable anguish," to this shift where we now find that the Lord is "worthy of praise and proclamation." And this isn't just personal praise, but starting in verse 22, the author is inviting others into the Psalm. This praise is something we do together. In context, Jesus is leading us in this praise, and this is the way this Psalm is quoted and applied in Hebrews 2. After the resurrection, Jesus is able to call us "*brethren*" for the

first time. He is our brother, but he is worthy in every way, and when we worship and when we partake of the Lord's Supper, he is with us.

And, starting in verse 27, we now take this message to *"the ends of the earth."* This is the commission that is given to all disciples after the Lord's resurrection. We have a message to share. And it is shared not just geographically, but across time as well, from one generation to the next. In verses 30-31, future generations will hear this message and serve him, and his message will be proclaimed to those still to be born.

And this proclamation, by the way, is specifically referred to as being a part of the Lord's Supper. 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."* We tell others, David says, *"because He has performed it,"* he has done it. In his death and resurrection, Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He saved us from our sins. This is what we remember when we partake of the Lord's Supper.

At this time, we plan on singing three more songs, and then we'll partake of the Lord's Supper,

Low in the Grave He Lay (#408)

Before the Throne (BCBC #19)

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (#742)

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com