

Morning Sermon

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[0:00] So, Psalm 118 was one of the Psalms that was quoted on the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem.

! We could read of the account in any one of the Gospels, but we're going to read from Mark chapter! 11. Mark 11, and this is page 1015, and if you're looking from one of the Red Pew Bibles, I'm going to read the first 11 verses. As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, why are you doing this?

Say, the Lord needs it, and we'll send it back here shortly. They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, what are you doing untying that colt? They answered it Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.

When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest. Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything. But since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. Amen. Now I'm going to focus our attention today on those words that occur at the end of verse 9, Hosanna, or save. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And to focus on them, I'd like us just to turn back to the original setting, back to Psalm 118, page 616 in the Red Pew Bibles. Because this verse is key to understanding not just what occurred on that day, those many years ago, but this verse is key to understanding and really unlocking, you know, the central theme of the whole of Scripture. You know, and as we look at Psalm 118, Psalm 118 is a big psalm, so we're not going to be looking at it in exhaustive detail by any means. But just a few observations before we look at it. I just want to say, first of all, the song fits the context. There's a section of Psalms 113 to 118, which is known as the Hallel or the Egyptian Hallel, the praise songs, reminding the people of God that their God rescued them, rescued them from Egypt, set them free from captivity. And these were songs that were often sung at festival times. You see, Passover was approaching, and it's not surprising that people were singing that song. It's just like at the end of a wedding. At the end of the wedding, you know it's approaching midnight or 1 a.m. whenever the venue is about to close. And the strains of all the strains of Auld Lang Syne are sounded. So you know this is the last song. The wedding has come to an end. The song and the occasion fit perfectly. Another thing to notice, and this is helpful when you're reading the New Testament, is that when an Old Testament passage is quoted, it's not just the portion that's quoted, but it's the whole passage that's referenced. So for example, if I were to say four score and seven years ago, I'm not just quoting the opening line of the

[4:08] Gettysburg Address, but I'm referencing the whole of the address, the whole speech. The fragment reminds you of a whole. If you're more contemporary than that, you know, if I said hello, it's me, you might be reminded of a song, of an anthem recently by a famous female singer. The fragment reminds you of the whole. And the fragment of 1-1-8 reminds us of the whole psalm. And I'd like to just make a few, as we turn to Psalm 1-1-18, I'd just like to notice three things. Three things that are actually, I think, quite a few.

But sometimes obvious things need to be emphasized. And sometimes obvious things are there for a reason. God wants us to see certain things. And sometimes, as a teacher, I know that there's a

value to repetition. I'm sure parents repeat things to children.

And I know for a fact that spouses often repeat things one to another. Sometimes repetition is very valuable. So the first thing we want to notice in Psalm 1-18 is the repetition that occurs at the beginning and at the end.

We see this a lot in Scripture. When you have a repeated phrase or a repeated verse. And particularly when you start and finish on the same note.

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever. Verse 1. Verse 29. Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever.

[5:54] The Psalm begins with thanksgiving. The Psalm concludes with thanksgiving. And the reason why we are so thankful is that our God is good and our God does good.

He's a good God who demonstrates His goodness time and time and time again. And these two verses, as it were, provide a frame to capture the whole of the Psalm.

Now, again, language is an interesting thing. It's difficult to capture certain words from one language to another. You know, some words translate quite easily. You know, a lot of languages have the same adjectives. Tall and short, young and old.

And you can kind of use them one for one. You know, you kind of know what's going on here. But this word love is hard to capture in just one word.

You see, because what's spoken of here is a love that is consistent. A love that is persistent. A love that is promised. A love that is delivered. A love that is personal. A love that is powerful.

[7:07] And it's hard to capture that in one word. But that one word that's being used here is a powerful word. And it's repeated in verse 2. His love, same word, endures forever. It's repeated in verse 3. His love endures forever.

It's repeated in case you missed it in verse 4. His love endures forever. And when the Psalmist comes to an end, he said, let me just tell you again. His love endures forever.

You see, our God has presented himself in a remarkable way. He has given to us the Bible. He's given to us the story of creation. Begins with creation. It ends with recreation. And the thread that unites the whole of the story is love.

It's a love that's personal. It's a love that's powerful. It's a love that's persistent. It's a love that never lets you go. It's a love that never lets you down.

Yesterday, when I was conducting Kirstie Ann and Tom's wedding, I was trying to convey something of the love that God has for them. And something of the love that they were going to profess to each other. You see, this love is not conditional.

[8:25] God doesn't love you when you're doing the right thing. God doesn't love you when you're having your best days. God doesn't have you if, when, with certain circumstances.

It seems to me that God is saying that he loves us, not because of who we are. He loves us because of who he is.

God doesn't love you when you're doing the right thing. He loves us. Now, recently, I got a new front door. And the new front door came with a new lock, maybe not surprisingly. But it was a lot, one of these locks that's quite complicated. You know, so this key, I needed an extra key.

And you can't go to Timson's, or other vendors I'm sure are available, but you can't go to Timson's with this lock, because it's quite an intricate lock. You actually have to order it, you have to give them certain codes. It's a unique code, it's a unique key.

And you see, there's a unique key in the Bible that explains to us what this love looks like. This love, this persistent, personal commitment, love that never lets you go, love that never lets you down.

[9:36] And if you just keep Psalm 18, you know, with your finger, if you turn into the New Testament to John's Gospel, John gives us a key to unlock this particular message.

In verse 14 of chapter 1, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The word translated love in Psalm 118 is the same word that's translated grace here. Covenantal love, dependable, reliable, persistent, consistent love.

John testified concerning him. And he cried out saying, this is the one I spoke about. When I said, he who comes after me has surpassed me, because he was before me. Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

That word again, repeated and repeated. Grace, love. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. So when the psalmist says, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever, it's a signpost to Jesus Christ.

[10:52] You've heard it. You've read it. The Old Testament promised. The New Testament says you've now seen it. You've now experienced it. You've now seen this love in a person.

And you see this complicated key. You see this unique key. Because the key here is one who is God and human. That's quite complicated.

One who has no beginning and yet was born. One who cannot die and yet did die. You see this complicated key unlocks the whole message.

So love is not just an abstract quality or quantity. It's not just a flutter of the heart. It is that. That's important. The heart flutters. That's good. But the love of the Bible is persistent.

Is consistent. Is unconditional. But the love of God is found one place. And it's found in a person. The words that Jesus spoke.

[11:52] The life that Jesus lived. The death that Jesus died. So this frame that captures the whole of the psalm. But this frame which captures the whole of scripture.

Begins with Jesus. Ends with Jesus. And it's filled with Jesus from start to finish. So it's a love story. Where God is professing his love to a people.

And he's continually saying it. And he's continually showing it. And his desire is that we respond to him personally. To his love.

To his grace. So whenever you see a repetition. Particularly at the beginning and at the end of a passage. It's there to highlight the whole of the passage.

Second thing to notice. Is that the theme of this whole psalm. Is consistent from beginning to end. The theme is a theme of redemption.

[12:52] God is setting his people free. This was sung to remind the people of Egypt. The land of slavery. The land of persecution.

The land of oppression. The land where they were misused and abused. But it was a land from which they were rescued. It was a slavery from which they were set free.

And the imagery is consistent here. Verse 5 says that they were hard pressed. And they were brought into a spacious place.

They were slaves in Egypt. They were making bricks without straw. And God says I've got something better for you. I've got a promised land. And this promised land.

Is a land that's flowing with milk and with honey. It's a spacious place. Verse 7 the imagery. The Lord is with me. He is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies.

[13:49] You see in Egypt the people of God were hard pressed. And they were weak. And they were vulnerable. But the great message of the Bible. Is that even if you are a minority of one.

A minority of one with God. Is on the victorious side. Because he is mighty. He is powerful. He triumphs. He delivers. The might of the Egyptian army was nothing.

Nothing compared to God. The world and the flesh and the devil seem great. And seem powerful. But the world, the flesh and the devil. Compared to our God.

His might. His power. They are as nothing. Verse 10. Then the nations surrounded me. But in the name of the Lord I cut them down.

Surrounded. Nowhere to go. Nowhere to turn. You think of the Israelites. They had the Red Sea to one side. And they had the Egyptian army to another. Nowhere to go.

[14:49] Either they were going to get wet. They're going to drown. Or they're going to be overwhelmed. They're not an army. They're a dispossessed people. They're a group of slaves. The water and the army.

And God made a way where there was no way. And God destroyed the enemies of the people of God. To demonstrate his grace and his power. Verse 14.

The Lord is my strength and my defense. He has become my salvation. The theme of victory. The theme of triumph. The theme of delivery. The theme of rescue.

The theme of hopeless circumstances transformed. So maybe this morning you're saying to yourself. My situation is not filled with hope.

My situation is not filled with joy. My situation is not particularly positive. You read this psalm and you are reminded. That the God that we worship.

[15:46] Delights in doing the impossible. The God that we praise. Is characterized by victory. By rescue. By redemption. By restoration.

And by renewal. Verse 15 just sums it up. Shouts of joy. And victory. Resound in the tents of the righteous. There may be times of crying.

There may be times of sorrow. There may be times where the tears are flowing. But the overall picture is not a picture of tears and sorrow and suffering. But the overall picture is a picture of joy and victory and celebration.

So as the Passover was approaching. And as Jerusalem was all astir. The New Testament writers tell us that there was a crowd that followed Jesus.

And there was a crowd that came out to Jesus. You see the city was growing. Was overflowing in population. Just like August in Edinburgh. Right? August in Edinburgh you can't turn anywhere.

[16:51] Because the city is filled with people. Filled with performers. Filled with tourists. Filled with people that want to see and hear and experience this great city firsthand.

And the city of Jerusalem was filled with people. And filled with expectation. Now the application is quite obvious throughout the psalm.

We're told in verse 17 that we proclaim what the Lord has done. We are told in verse 19 that we enter and we give thanks to the Lord. We respond.

We are not the victorious ones. We are not the victors. We are not the triumphant ones. We are the ones that enter into the victory. We are the ones that join in the shouts of triumph.

Because God has won the victory. God has made a way where there is no way. We give him thanks. We enter and we praise. We heard a moment ago.

[17:50] That clanging note. That Kellen made when he hit the keyboard. It just didn't sound right did it? And in the midst of this psalm. There's just a note that doesn't sound right.

It doesn't seem to fit. And you see this. In verse 22. The stone the builders has rejected has become the cornerstone.

Verse 21 says, I will give you thanks for you answered me. You have become my salvation. So using musical terminology. You've got a major chord here. This is an uplifted chord.

This is a triumphant note that sounded. And then all of a sudden we're in the minor key. The stone the builders has rejected has become the cornerstone. How could such a thing be possible?

I don't know about you. But I sometimes do DIY. I try to avoid it. But sometimes it's unavoidable. The problem that I usually have with DIY is I have too many parts at the end.

[18:49] You know, I've got too many screws or too many nuts or too many bolts. And I kind of hope to myself, maybe those were just extra. But the problem here is not too many, but one too few.

One piece too few. And it just so happens to be the piece that holds everything together. I'm reminded of a friend who, as a gesture of goodwill, he was a trainee electrician.

And he said, but I'm pretty good at joinery. And I said, well, could you put up a set of shelves? And he did put up a set of shelves. And as he left and he went back, I think he was living in Skye at the time, I remember phoning him later in the day and just letting him know that the shelves came down.

And he said, yeah, I was afraid they would. And, you know, sometimes we look at our lives and we think, our lives are collapsing. They're not holding together. There seems to be a significant piece that's missing here.

And the shelves and the life are in danger. Of coming down. And this note that sounded is saying that it's possible for everything to be in place.

[20:08] And yet one thing to be missing. I'm reminded of the Lord Jesus. Remember the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler, he looked at him and

loved him. The rich young ruler had a desire to go to heaven.

The rich young ruler had a level of awareness and understanding of the law of God. And he obeyed the law of God. And Jesus said those striking words.

One thing you lack. One thing you lack. You see, the people were in danger of missing the one thing that was absolutely essential.

And as you read verse 22, you think, the stone the builders has rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this. It is marvelous in our eyes. And you think to yourself, that just sounds like Jesus.

The essential one was rejected. And yet he did prove to be essential and is now a cause for great celebration. And what we feel and what we think, we don't need to guess.

[21:09] Because the Lord Jesus himself in Matthew chapter 21 said, Have you never read in the scriptures, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone? The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.

The apostle Peter put it this way. Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. Remember the word I was saying to the children? Precious? Infinitely valuable? This stone is precious.

But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. So you see, Jesus is the cornerstone. He's the capstone. He holds everything together.

Without him, there is no joy. Without him, there is no cause for thanksgiving. Without him, there is no victory. There is no triumph. There is no redemption.

There is no restoration. There is no renewal. But with him, he holds it all together. We look at our lives and we see instability.

[22:08] We look at our situations and we see insecurity. We look at our world. I don't know about you. I'm reluctant to watch the news. I'm reluctant to listen to the news.

Because I just can't cope with it. It's just, the stories just seem to get worse and worse. But you see, where Jesus is present, there's stability.

There's security. There's completeness. There's wholeness. And there is fullness. So you have the frame. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

His love endures forever. The repeated refrain of redemption, victory, triumph, praise, thanksgiving. This discordant note that sounded, the builders have rejected the one stone that is absolutely essential.

And now we come, at the end of our sermon, we come to the text that we started with. We come to those words in Mark chapter 11, verse 9, which is verses 25 and 26.

[23:17] Hosanna, save, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Now, we're told in the Bible that we are not to misuse the name of God. Now, the name of God is not just a descriptor.

Just like Robert is my first name. That's my name. My last name is Akroyd. But the name of God is more than that. The name of God is everything.

The name of God captures his nature. The name of God captures his character. The name of God captures his history. The name of God captures him in all of his fullness. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Save. Hosanna. Now, this crowd was saying the right things. This crowd was quoting the right psalm. But in just a few days, the chorus of praise becomes a chorus of derision.

The chorus of praise and salvation becomes a chorus of crucify. Away with this man. Give us Barabbas. So, what do we conclude here?

[24:23] We conclude that what they actually said was right. Even if they didn't know it was right. They said more than they realized. They identified more than they understood.

Because what this verse is saying, because when you read the context of the psalm, salvation has already been accomplished. Salvation has already been received.

This ongoing save us is a recognition that salvation is a necessary, permanent situation for the people of God.

I was saved when I became a Christian in 1993. But I need God's gracious intervention today. I need his gracious salvation now.

So, you see, the message of the Bible is love, is redemption, is salvation. The best way of putting that together is the gospel.

[25:18] For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. If you're not yet a Christian, you need to know that salvation is found in Jesus.

If you've been a Christian for many years, you need to know that salvation is found in Jesus. We need his help. We need his comfort. We need his strength.

And when we cry out to Jesus, we are crying out to God himself. With all power. With all majesty. With all authority. With all grace.

With all love. With all mercy. And with all grace. And we cry out to the one who is able. And we cry out to the one who is willing. And we cry out to the one who has accomplished all for us.

May it never be said for any of us that this essential capstone, cornerstone is rejected. Rather, may we see in Jesus the one who fits all things together.

[26:22] The missing piece of my life. The missing piece of our lives. The missing piece of this world who somehow brings unity and harmony and wholeness and completeness.

Is found in none other than Jesus Christ. God in the flesh. The law given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

You've heard it. Now see it. You've heard it. Now believe it. You've heard it. Now experience it. If not for the first time, continue to experience again and again and again.

The God who rescues. The God who saves. The God who loves. Jesus Christ. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

We celebrate. We rejoice. We rejoice. His victory. His grace. His love. Give thanks to the Lord. For he is good.

[27:18] His love endures forever. Amen. And amen. Let's pray. Father in heaven. Father in heaven. We thank you. We thank you for this scene which is so vivid.

And we thank you that even though many might not have known what they were saying. Or the implications of what they were saying. We now see that what they said was 100% true.

They recognized that salvation was found in the one who was riding on the colt. The one for whom palm branches were strewn. The one who was welcomed with shouts of joy and salvation.

So Lord, I pray that each one of us would welcome Jesus into our lives. That we would see that he, the capstone, the cornerstone, holds all things together. And for those who might not yet have done so, may they do so now.

And for those of us who have and may have done so a long, long time ago. May we renew our vows. May we renew our thanksgiving. May we renew our recognition.

[28:22] And may we see in him the source of all light. The source of all joy. The source of all victory. The source of all love. And we give thanks to you, our God.

Through Jesus, our Lord. Because your love endures forever. Because you are both great and good. Amen.