

Psalm 118

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Preacher: John Woods

[0 : 00] Well, good morning everybody and welcome to this pre-recorded service for the 11th of April 2021.

! My name is Philip Wells. I'm going to be introducing, but the talk is going to be from our good friend and colleague John Woods.

I'm Service Minister of the Church and as I've said I'm going to be leading off. Welcome to everybody. This is on behalf of Calvary Church in Brighton.

We are an independent Baptist church which teaches the Bible based on the south coast of England. And back a year ago or longer we were 70 to 80 people meeting on a Sunday morning and we are planning to be opening up under the Covid restrictions subject to government guidelines on the 25th of April.

So that's something to look forward to. So as you will have gathered, the introduction has been pre-recorded a week earlier and as we come towards the Sunday of the broadcast, we've received the sad news of the death of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the husband of the Queen.

[1 : 31] And we are told that we should make prayers and intercessions and giving thanks for all, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

So I think it is fitting for us to note the passing of Prince Philip, who has served his country faithfully over many, many years and been a support to Her Majesty the Queen, our Head of State, and to mark his passing as we meet together as a church.

As a church, we extend our condolences to the royal family insofar as we have any contact with the royal family.

But it is a sad thing for our nation and for those close to Prince Philip, obviously.

So, before we go on, I'd like to offer prayer. And I've looked up in the, not the Book of Common Prayer, but the successor to the Book of Common Prayer, and to read a couple of the prayers that are in that prayer book.

[2 : 54] The first prayers have a response, which is, hear us, good Lord. And I'd invite you to say, hear us, good Lord, along with me.

So here is a prayer for the leaders of our nation. Let us pray. Guide the leaders of the nation into the ways of peace and justice.

Hear us, good Lord. God, and strengthen your servant Elizabeth our Queen, that she may put her trust in you and seek your honour and glory.

Hear us, good Lord. Endue the High Court of Parliament and the ministers of the Crown with wisdom and understanding.

Hear us, good Lord. Bless those who administer the law, that they may uphold justice, honesty and truth.

[3 : 55] Hear us, good Lord. Teach us to use the fruits of the earth to your glory and for the good of all mankind. Hear us, good Lord.

Bless and keep all your people. Hear us, good Lord. Amen. And let me say a prayer again from this prayer book for the Queen, to which the ending word is Amen in the usual way.

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, bless our sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and all who are in authority under her, that they may order all things in wisdom and equity, righteousness and peace, to the honour of your name, the good of your church and people.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. And let's add a prayer for comfort. Grant comfort and strength we pray to Queen Elizabeth in her loss and all her family.

In this loss, may they find comfort from the God of all comfort. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. And now we'll continue according to the plan on the screen.

[5 : 23] I commend to you the five Easter questions which were recorded before Easter, but of course are still relevant. And we are in the post Easter period and John Woods is going to be speaking relevantly to that on Psalm 118.

Psalm 118 says in verse 17, I will not die but live and proclaim what the Lord has done. I will not die but live and proclaim what the Lord has done.

True of Messiah and through Messiah it's true of his people. We will not die but live and proclaim what the Lord has done. So, let's continue with our meeting.

The plan is up on the screen there. And as the Psalm says, Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever.

And we will think of the strong and death-defeating love of the Lord as shown in the resurrection. And we'll sing as we sang last week, I believe, number 464, In the tomb so cold they laid him.

[6 : 36] That this victim claimed.

So cold they laid him That its victim claimed Powers of hell they could Not hold him back to life he gave Christ is risen Let us be conquered Christ is risen He shall be forever Hell had spent its fury on him Left him crucified Yet by blood he boldly conquered Sin and death defied Christ is risen Let us be conquered Christ is risen He shall be forever

Now the fear of death is broken Love has won the crown Prisoners of the darkness Listen, walls are torn down Christ is risen Christ is risen Death has been conquered Christ is risen He shall be forever Born in the me Thank you.

Thank you.

Christ is risen. He shall reign forever. And now let's pray.

[10 : 02] I'll pray a prayer and then we will add to that the Lord's Prayer, which will be up on the screen and we can say that together. Let's pray. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever.

Let Israel say, His love endures forever. Let the house of Aaron say, His love endures forever. Let those who fear the Lord say, His love endures forever.

I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks for you answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. The Lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

And we bring to you our praise, Lord God, that your love endures forever. That the promises that you have made endure forever. That the commitments that you have undertaken endure forever.

[11 : 10] That the plans that you have made are not to be altered but endure forever. And that your determination to save your people through Jesus Christ endures forever.

And that the task that you have given him of bringing each one of his elect people safe to heaven endures forever. And that you will do this even if death and hell gets in the way.

You will bring about your promises and save your people. So we thank you, those of us who have received your salvation. That you have heard our cries.

That you have taken away our hopelessness and given us hope. That you have taken away our aloneness and brought us into fellowship with you. That you have brought us out of the miry pit and set our feet upon a rock.

That you have seen our disgrace and our shame and taken it away by Christ's bearing this upon the cross. We thank you, Lord, that you have taken our sins and forgiven them through the blood of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 20] And we thank you that you have come into our stony hearts and made them hearts of responsiveness to you and love for you by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We thank you for you have answered me and you have become my salvation. We praise you that Jesus Christ came to earth, died on the cross and is raised again.

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. The Lord has done this. It is marvellous in our eyes. Oh Lord, save us. Grant us success.

And we pray that you would do that. We pray that you would look upon the work of your kingdom, particularly here in Brighton, and grant success. Grant that your churches should no longer be weak and tossed about and seeming almost on the verge of extinction.

And we pray, Lord, that you would uphold our dear friends in the various churches. New Life, Moolscum we think of. Please bless and uphold them. The Park Hill Evangelical Church we think of. [13:22] And pray that you will revive and restore and bless that work. The Grace Baptist Church plant we think of. And pray that you will prosper that. Safeguard David's skull and Naomi.

And give them knowledge of your will and strength to serve you. We pray that you bless Tony Bickley and the folk at Ebenezer Reformed Baptist Church. Grant them your vision and your empowering and your fruitfulness.

Pray for our friends at Southern Cross Evangelical Church. And pray that you will restore and revive them. And grant them to find someone who can lead them on into the next generation.

We pray for the friends at Peacehaven Evangelical Church. And pray that you will bless them with all the opportunities and possibilities that are before them. So please will you hear our prayers. Forgive our sins. Save your people. Uphold in each and every one. And bless your churches as we go on into this year. We pray. We pray that you will uphold everyone who is low.

[14:27] Who is perhaps cast down. And just feeling the long effects of this pandemic. And pray that you will have mercy on them. And make all your people to taste something of your joy.

And to taste something of peace at this time. And again we pray that you will lead us forward as a church. Particularly in this matter of future ministry.

And provide for us. So here are our prayers. And we pray in Jesus name. And also now we pray the Lord's Prayer.

Amen. Our Father in heaven. Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins. As we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil.

[15:26] For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory. For ever and ever. Amen. So, Amen. We've prayed. And in a moment we're going to have something with the children in mind.

It's going to be a reading that Lillia has done for us. And let me just introduce it. We're going to have read to us about Jesus entering Jerusalem.

Which we were remembering a fortnight ago. The triumphal entry. And we're going to have some Lego. A video of that scene.

Done rather nicely. The people sing out. Or shout out. Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. And after the reading. I'll just make a comment about that word. Hosanna. So let's have the reading now. Thank you very much. As they all approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethany.

[16:33] It was out on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent out two disciples. He said to them, go to the village ahead of you. As soon as you get there, you'll find a donkey tied up.

Her colt will be with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them. The owner will send them right away.

The disciples went and did what Jesus told them to do. They brought the donkey and the colt. They placed their coats on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their coats on the road.

Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Some people went ahead of him and some followed. And they all shouted, Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heaven! When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up.

[17:30] The people asked, who is this? The crowds answered, this is Jesus. He is the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. So thank you for the reading.

It included the multitudes crying out, Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

And although that was to do with Palm Sunday, which as I say we remembered a couple of weeks ago, it actually fits very well with the psalm that we're going to be thinking of, which is Psalm 118, which is going to be read in just a moment.

Because those quotes as Jesus entered Jerusalem are actually quotes from Psalm 118. Hosanna! Save now, I pray, O Lord! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! These are quotes from Psalm 118. And the Hosanna means save now.

[18 : 27] It's an appeal to Messiah, to the Lord's Messiah, to take his power, to reign, to show that he is king, to reign and rule and advance his purposes.

And that's something that we want to say every day and something that we want God to do every day. It's a relevant prayer for every day. So, thank you very much, Lillia and Anya and family, for putting that together for us.

And now we'll have the psalm itself read by Rosemary. Thank you very much, Rosemary. Psalm 118 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

His love endures forever. Let Israel say, his love endures forever. Let the house of Aaron say, his love endures forever.

Let those who fear the Lord say, his love endures forever. In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free.

[19 : 37] The Lord is with me, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me, he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes. All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I cut them off.

They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the Lord I cut them off. They swarmed around me like bees, but they died out as quickly as burning thorns.

In the name of the Lord I cut them off. I was pushed back and about to fall, but the Lord helped me.

The Lord is my strength and my song.

He has become my salvation. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous. The Lord's right hand has done mighty things.

[20 : 41] The Lord's right hand is lifted high. The Lord's right hand has done mighty things. I will not die, but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.

The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death. Open for me the gates of righteousness. I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. I will give thanks, for you answered me. You have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

The Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. O Lord, save us.

O Lord, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you. The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine upon us.

[21 : 49] With bows in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give you thanks. You are my God, and I will exalt you.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever. And we come to sing. We'll sing two songs back to back. First of all, we'll sing a version of Psalm 118.

Something very good and right about singing the very words, well, not the very words, but the translated, paraphrased words of the Psalms that God says this is what his people should be singing.

So we'll sing Psalm 118. Give thanks to God, for he is good. And then we'll sing, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

And that's the song with the new chorus in this version, Christ alone, cornerstone. And that's who he is, isn't it? The stone that the builders rejected has become the capstone or the cornerstone.

[22 : 52] So two songs to sing back to back if you're interested in the numbers 118 and 779, but the words will come up on the screen. Give thanks to God, for he is good, the everlasting giver.

Let all his people praise the Lord, whose love endures forever. For his right hand has made me strong, I am his new creation.

He is my God, he is my song, my strength and my salvation. When troubles loomed on every side, and aimlessly surrounded.

To God, my Lord, I quickly cried, and soon his help abounded. For God has heard my desperate plea, and seen my pain and sadness.

He came to me, and set me free, in paths of peace and gladness. To trust in God, in him alone.

[24 : 33] The stone that was rejected, has now become the cornerstone that God has resurrected.

The day is his, the first of days, to celebrate with singing. Rejoice in God, and give him grace, the best rosettes bringing.

The Lord has made his light to shine, on all our dark depression.
 For these two ways, believers join his victory procession. Oh, save us, Lord, give us success, your gifts flow like a river.
 Oh, bless us, Lord, whose name we bless, your love endures forever. My hope is built.
 [26 : 13] For nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness. No merit of my own, I claim.
 But holy trust in Jesus' name. When darkness fails, his lovely face.
 I rest on his unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds and will not fail.
 Christ alone, cornerstone, we make strong.
 In the Savior's love, through the storm, he is Lord, Lord of all.
 [27 : 26] He loves his love, and will not help. He loves his love, and will not help. Support me in the rising flood.
 When all around my soul gives way. He then is all my hope and say.
 I trust his righteous character. His counsel promises and power.
 His name and honor are at stake. To save me from the burning rain.
 Christ alone, cornerstone, we make strong. Cornerstone, we make strong.
 [28 : 29] In the Savior's love, through the storm, he is Lord, Lord of all.
 And will not help. When the Lord's love, his voice shall sound. Oh, may I then in him be found.
 Boonding in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.
 Christ alone, cornerstone, we make strong. In the Savior's love, through the stone, He is Lord, Lord of all.
 Christ alone, cornerstone, weak made strong, in the Savior's love, through the stone, He is Lord, Lord of all.
 [30 : 04] So John's going to lead us in these thoughts on Psalm 118. I haven't seen the video yet. I think he might pray, but in case he doesn't, let's pray anyway.
 Lord, help us to hear your word, and that our hearts might burn within us, as we find that Christ is in all the Scriptures. We pray that Christ would make his presence known through the opening up of Scripture, and enlarge our faith, cause our hearts to burn, and our faith to be strong, and our hope to be strong, and our love for you to be strong.
 So help us to hear. Amen. Thank you for your welcome to Calvary Church this weekend. Very pleased to be preaching on the Sunday after Easter.
 In the traditional sense of the church year, Easter continues all the way through to Pentecost, and we are in the season of Easter.
 It does seem a pity to leave it behind too quickly. I always look forward to reading the Spectator magazine, not least because it does keep a door open to the possibility that there might be a God, and that Christianity might have something to say to us in the 21st century.
 [31 : 30] And the Easter special, published just before Easter, was no exception. On the cover of the magazine was this brilliant image, imagined image, of what Easter Sunday morning might have looked like from the empty tomb.
 The huge stone that had been rolled over the opening of Jesus' borrowed tomb has burst open, and the sun is visible on the sunrise of Easter morning.
 And the tomb itself is empty, apart from the grave clothes which had been left by Jesus, who is alive from the dead. He is risen. He is risen. He is risen indeed.
 Hallelujah is what this particular image is trying to communicate. What is particularly remarkable, though, is not only that the oldest magazine in the world, the Spectator, should print a magazine with this as their cover, but that a number of the articles inside explore themes around Christianity and around Easter, as was the case with many newspapers and magazines over the Easter period. And one of the articles inside speaks about the transformation which results from experiencing Jesus Christ and the reality of the news about him.
 [33 : 05] These are the words. Ultimately, transformation is what Easter is about. A man bodily raised from the dead and returning to his new body, neither corpse nor ghost, to have breakfast with his friends.
 The life after death, as it is termed, was a completely novel idea that became the basis of a hope that has changed everything.
 A hope that has changed everything. Certainly, we might ignore the Easter message.

We might ignore the news that God has become man and lived amongst us and died upon a cross and it is claimed, wrote again on the third day.

We might claim that to be the case. But we cannot avoid that there is a message of hope that has changed everything, even the way that we date our history before and after Christ.

[34 : 31] We live in the year of the Lord, 2021, marking just over two centuries since the time of the birth of Jesus, nearly 2,000 years since his death upon the cross and the claim that he had been raised from the dead.

They say that a week is a long time in politics. And certainly that's been the case over this past year or so with things changing so quickly.

The opinions, leaders, parties, policies, rapid change, one week. And of course, the Easter week is a case in point that one week in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ was so fast moving and dramatic and its impact upon human history and human experience is so powerful and considerable.

As we said, in the traditional church year, Easter, the season of Easter continues from Easter Sunday through to Pentecost in order that people might be able to take a long lingering look at the implications of this astonishing news, this hope that has changed everything, might linger for a while upon all the different contours of this amazing message that Jesus is alive.

And on this particular Sunday, I want us to take a look for a little while at some aspects of Psalm 118 and in particular, the way in which that psalm is used in the New Testament.

[36 : 21] Psalm 118 is an interesting psalm, isn't it? It's tucked in between the very shortest psalm, Psalm 117, that speaks about the amazing faithfulness of God to all the nations and the longest psalm, Psalm 119, that speaks about human faithfulness to God by listening to and submitting to his word.

And in many ways, Psalm 118, and what we're going to see about Psalm 118, fits very well between those two themes, the faithfulness of God and the faithful commitment of someone who is devoted to that faithful God.

In many ways, Jesus stands perfectly between those two themes, for he is the faithful God who has come to our world.

And as a real human being, he has given a faithful life of obedience to his heavenly father for us, standing in our place, obedient for us, standing in our place, bearing the consequences of our disobedience for us.

Psalm 118 is quoted or alluded to from between 20 and 60 times in the New Testament, depending on quite how we see those echoes and hints of a reference to this particular psalm.

[38 : 01] It is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. It is remarkable that we can turn to this ancient song and see something about the truth of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

We encounter the psalm on Palm Sunday, just to rewind a bit in the Easter story. And all four gospels refer to Psalm 118 in their telling of the story of Jesus entering into Jerusalem.

It forms some of the words that the crowd will use as they speak about Jesus, as they respond to this amazing event of Jesus riding triumphantly into Jerusalem and palm branches being waved and a spectacular moment of welcome.

Jesus, who had largely lived incognito at many, many times, who had not sought to draw attention to himself, suddenly, in this blaze of publicity, the crowds demonstrating that he is someone worthy of note and worthy of attention.

On this Palm Sunday, these words from Psalm 118, verses 25 and 26, Lord, save us. Lord, grant us success.

[39 : 43] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you. Hosanna. Lord, save us. Lord, save us.

There was this sense in which Jesus was coming into Jerusalem as the one who would rescue the people. Now, clearly, there were mixed messages in these words.

For some people, all this meant rescue us from the yoke of Roman slavery, help us to be free again, make Israel great again, help us to stand tall in the world.

Others amongst the crowd do recognise that perhaps salvation needs to be deeper than that, that our greatest problems are not political and social, they are spiritual, that to be set free inside is the major step towards seeing social and political change.

We need to be changed from the inside out. It is so possible, isn't it, to have a vision of a transformed world, to try and deal with injustices, to try and square the circle of social problems, but

forget that if you do not have changed individuals, it is very difficult to have a changed society.

[41 : 07] And this psalm has a place in the Lord's Supper when Jesus met with his disciples. We read in chapter 26 of Matthew's Gospel, at the end of the Lord's Supper, we read Matthew chapter 26 and verse 30, that when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

This was immediately before Jesus is arrested and stands trial and goes to the cross. They sang a hymn.

They sang the hymn that is called Halal. Halal because of the way that this particular hymn is constructed, beginning and ending with hallelujah, praise to the Lord.

And the Halal is a particular run of psalms from Psalm 113 to Psalm 118. It was seen to be a unit that was sung at the Passover time.

And it's interesting that it is Psalm 118, which is the last psalm, the last song that Jesus sings before he is arrested and goes to the cross.

[42 : 28] You know, I kind of think about this and I think, you know, what was it like for the disciples and Jesus to sing this particular psalm at this particular time?

What was going through the mind of Jesus? What was going through the mind of the disciples as they sang these words? Can we imagine what he might be thinking, what he might be anticipating as he knew what was to come as he sings this particular psalm?

And in many ways, as we reflect on some of the verses from this psalm, we are trying to sing off the same hymn sheet as Jesus. We're trying to get a grip on his intentions, his mindset, as he leaves the upper room and the Lord's Supper and goes out into the future that will be climaxed in the cross and then eclipsed by the resurrection on the third day.

we see that there is distress expressed in this psalm and there is victory expressed in this psalm. There is celebration. It is a psalm that begins verse 1, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever.

[44 : 00] it is a psalm of celebration but a psalm of celebration in thanksgiving for a crisis which has been resolved, a crisis from which the person at the heart of the crisis has experienced rescue and a completely new beginning.

The psalm is a perfect preparation in a sense for the crisis that is before Jesus, the crisis that hemmed him in on the cross and led to his death there.

So we come to Good Friday and these words in verse 5, when hard pressed I cried to the Lord verses 10 to 11 where we have a description of being surrounded by enemies, surrounded by bees buzzing furiously and frantically.

When hard pressed I cried to the Lord. It is an amazingly sharp description of what was happening to Jesus as he goes toward the cross, as the enemies circle around him, as those who falsely accuse him gang up against him, as the crowd change their tune from Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, to crucify him.

As Jesus carries his cross, as he goes to be crucified at Golgotha, he is hard pressed. When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord.

[46 : 05] The psalm is the song of a king in crisis, a king who is pressed from every side, besieged by those who would do him ill.

Jesus, when hard pressed, cries to the Lord. He brought me into a spacious place, or set me free. The Lord is with me, I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? The psalm is about a crisis, about being hemmed in, but it's also about the confidence that the crisis will not be the defining thing about this individual.

The crisis will be real, the crisis will press in upon the character at the heart of this story, but the crisis will not be the last thing about this story.

he brought me into a spacious place. The Lord is with me, I will not be afraid, what can mere mortals do to me? I think it's always perhaps important for us to recognise that when we face difficulties and challenges in various ways, it may not be the final chapter of our lives.

[47 : 28] This too will pass, there will be another day, there will be another opportunity. We do feel, don't we, in this last year or so, that we've been very confined, stay at home, keep your distance, not being able to go to places that we would be so used to going to in the past, a restricted, a confined life, but this is not necessarily the whole of the story.

There is another day, there is a new day, there's fresh opportunity and the restricted place can become the spacious place. The place that's intimidating and frightening can be a place where

there is no fear, where we experience the deliverance and the grace of God.

The Lord is my strength and my song, he has become my salvation, verse 14. This is what Jesus was singing when he had had the supper with the disciples.

He was singing about being pressed, but he was also singing about rescue. And I think that it's important within an authentic Christian message and an authentic Christian experience to recognise that life combines those two factors, that life combines genuine suffering, difficulty, setbacks and challenges, human pain and sometimes devastation, but that this isn't the whole of the story, because our God is a God who gives us strength, who gives us song in our days of trouble and will be our salvation.

Christian The Christian life is not all about Good Friday. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming. And that's true in our human experiences.

[49 : 38] We might feel pressed at this moment, but it needn't necessarily be the defining aspect of our lives. The Lord is your strength.

He will strengthen you. The Lord is your song. He'll give you a song to sing. The Lord is your salvation. He will rescue you.

I received the newsletter from Christians Against Poverty the other day, and it told this story about Rebecca.

Rebecca, as a young woman, a teenager, was in an abusive relationship with a partner. She was pregnant, miscarried and their baby child died, 17 weeks old.

And unbeknown to Rebecca, her partner, her older partner, had been racking up huge amounts of debt so that she was responsible for huge sums of money far beyond her ability to pay.

[50 : 55] She'd lost her little girl who she named Riley and now she was facing losing everything else because of the recklessness of her partner.

For two years, bills kept coming into the door and Rebecca was frantic with worry. She wondered how she was going to survive, how she was going to feed herself and how she was going to warm herself in the home.

In 2019, she found out about Christians Against Poverty and she got in touch with them and she said that the remarkable thing about seeing the people at Christians Against Poverty is that they did not judge her.

They did not look down at her but they treated her with respect and love. She was assigned a helper, a debt counsellor who helped her to think through how she could approach her debt and how she could budget for the future.

In the process of this, she was invited along to the church that the debt counsellor went to. She said that during the sermon I felt love I had never felt before.

[52 : 12] I was no longer living just for me. I was living for Christ. I was delighted, said her helper, that Rebecca was baptised in October 2019.

It's wonderful, one of her friends said, to see how this formerly very shy young woman has a relationship with God, has a confidence in him that she has treasure in heaven.

With Cap's help, and with the Lord's help, she became debt-free in 2020, Easter 2020.

Which meant that in the hardest aspects of the pandemic, her finances were far more robust and she was able to make progress. So much so that in September 2020, she was able to begin training as a psychiatric nurse.

and she made a brilliant start passing with flying colours. Rebecca felt that she was hemmed in on every side by trouble.

[53 : 38] She was in a real crisis. But she cried out for help, she cried out for financial help and she received advice. And she cried out for spiritual help and saw in Jesus Christ a love for her that saw beyond her perilous circumstances, her financial mess, to a human being in need of being loved, forgiven and experiencing new life.

What did that writer of the article in The Spectator magazine say? The basis of a hope that changed everything.

I wonder what your crisis is at this moment. I wonder what fix you're in, what tight spot you're in. Jesus can meet you there.

And then on Easter Sunday we read these words Psalm 118 verse 16 The Lord's right hand has lifted high, the Lord's right hand has done mighty things. This is a term that is a quotation from the song in Exodus 15 about God's deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt.

The Lord's right hand has lifted high, the Lord's right hand has done mighty things. Jesus sings this just before he is arrested and goes to the cross.

[55 : 13] And he sings these words, verse 17 I will not die but live and will proclaim what the Lord has done. This is what Jesus was singing.

He was going to the cross aware of the pain and the stress of that experience but also aware that he was going to step through that experience and go beyond it.

I will not die but live and will proclaim what the Lord has done. This is the confidence that Jesus was singing when he sang with his disciples at the Lord's Supper.

I wonder what the disciples were thinking when he sang this and they sang this. I wonder what they were thinking when Jesus was trudging his way to the cross.

This is a confidence. As Jesus said in John's Gospel chapter 10 no one is taking my life from me I'm laying it down and I will take it up again. remarkable confidence remarkable hope.

[56 : 17] Of course we're told aren't we in John's Gospel chapter 19 and verse 30 that one of the words that Jesus speaks from the cross is the word it is finished.

I will proclaim what the Lord has done the psalm says. what has the Lord done? Finished. Finished his work.

The most famous rescue in all the world Jesus upon the cross says it's finished.

It has been done. It's been accomplished this work of bringing salvation to human beings of dealing with sin and death and hell of opening a door of life of opening a door of hope to those who are dead in their sins and who are hopeless and helpless without Christ.

It is finished. The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. Psalm 118 verse 22 is a statement that's quoted again and again in the New Testament in the Gospels and Acts and in the letters describing the work of Jesus Christ.

[57 : 45] The most famous stone in history is not a stone that can be found in Stonehenge or any other historic site.

stone is the stone that is a person. It is the stone that is Jesus. The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

Those who are experts, those who are the building experts who know about the materials to choose and where the materials need to go looked over this particular stone and they didn't feel it was up to the mark and they rejected the stone.

The stone that was supposed to be a seal to the door of his tomb is rolled away. The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner.

Jesus was the key stone that had come into the world revealing himself to his people but they rejected the chief stone. The builders the movers and shakers of the world of Jesus time they had no time for this stone.

[59 : 02] They rejected the stone. But there is a complete reversal of expectation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the very corner stone.

Someone has said that the building block that was rejected became the corner stone of a whole new world. Jesus was not the acceptable one.

He was not the acceptable one amongst those who were the movers and shakers in the first century. He simply did not fit into their expectations of what the king of heaven might look like, of what a rescue might look like.

His life, his teaching, his offer of salvation didn't fit into their particular worldview and lifestyle. Jesus didn't fit.

And of course, in the 21st century, often he doesn't fit either. He simply doesn't suit us. We would rather have another message. We would rather have another way of being rescued.

[60 : 10] We would rather have another way of committing ourselves to the future. He simply doesn't fit.

Seems to be foreign. Seems to be unacceptable. But God does not accept this rejection. God doesn't accept the no vote on Jesus because on the third day on the resurrection there is a yes vote.

The building block that was rejected became the cornerstone of a whole new world. The stone that was rejected suddenly becomes the foundation upon which we can build our lives.

A foundation, a solid foundation, not just for this life, but for eternity itself. When Jesus rose from the dead, said Kim Keller, he came as the first instalment of the power of God which will renew the

world at the end of history.

It seemed like a stone that could be tossed away. Unacceptable, not fitting, but in fact it was the very cornerstone of God's new creation, of God's new beginning for our world.

[61 : 30] There is no foundation for life unless we're founded upon the Lord Jesus Christ built on him. Build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ if you want a foundation that will never be shaken.

Easter is a one-off event, but it's also a continuing experience. I remember reading about a 19th century preacher called R.W.

Dale who discovered in his preparation for a sermon on one occasion that the importance of Easter and the importance of the power of the resurrection and as a result of that he decided that on every Sunday morning their congregation would begin their service with an Easter hymn to remind them that the one-off event is a continuing experience.

Jesus is alive. The reject stone has become the corner stone. That's something to celebrate.

Come people of the risen King. Rejoice in this fact. Verse 24 This is the day the Lord has made.

[62 : 49] We will rejoice and be glad in it. It's almost as if the resurrection morning Easter Sunday is described as a complete new beginning a new creation and that's the way the apostle Paul described it.

If anyone is in Christ their new creation the old is gone the new has come we're part of what God is doing to rebuild the universe a new heaven a new earth the home of righteousness the Lord has acted decisively he has done something that can produce life and hope and a fresh beginning for human beings on the earth.

This is obviously prophetic scripture says Augustine wanted us to understand something someday not of a common sort not visible to eyes of flesh not the kind of day that has a sunrise and a sunset but a day which could know a dawn but could never know a setting a dawn that would never know a setting this is the day that the Lord has made it's an event an event that happened in history Jesus rose from the dead there's also a continuing experience we continue to live in this day we continue to live in Easter day we are an Easter people because Jesus is alive the stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone no wonder the psalm concludes you are my

God and I will praise you you are my God and I will exalt you oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good for his mercy endures forever this is an echo of how the psalm begins he is good for his mercy endures forever that last verse verse 29 almost sums up the whole biblical story in a nutshell he is good his mercy endures forever good friday seems to have the message god is dead the hope is dead the promise is dead easter sunday morning tells us he is alive hope is alive all the message of jesus christ is true he has been vindicated the rejected one has been exalted you are my god i will praise you you are my god i will exalt you oh give thanks to the lord for he is good his mercy endures forever those were the last words on the lips of jesus before he went to his arrest and his death and they're the words of someone who knows that the story is not over yet death and he is the one who opens up a doorway of hope and eternity help us we pray to build our lives on him for we ask it in jesus name amen so we're grateful that we've heard god's word and to close we'll sing 495 rejoice the lord is king your lord and king adore mortals give thanks and sing and triumph evermore lift up your heart lift up your voice rejoice again i say rejoice and this is a wesley hymn and in a very classic manner he identifies the reigning lord with jesus none less than jesus jesus the savior reigns the god of truth and love when he had purged our stains he took his seat above his kingdom cannot fail he rules both earth and heaven the keys of death and hell are to our jesus given he sits at god's right hand till all his foes submit and bow to his command and fall beneath his feet rejoice in glorious hope jesus the judge shall come and take his servants up to their eternal home we soon shall hear the archangel's voice god's trumpet call shall sound rejoice so we'll sing 495 5 rejoice the lord is he your lord and king adore mortals

give thanks and sing and triumph evermore lift up your heart lift up your voice rejoice!

[69 : 08] and then I say rejoice! Jesus the saviour raised the god of truth and love when he had purged our stains he took his seat above lift up your heart lift up your voice rejoice again I say rejoice!

his his kingdom cannot fail he rules both earth and heaven the keys of death and hell are to our Jesus skin lift up your heart lift up your voice rejoice!

again I say rejoice! he sits at God's right hand till all his foes submit and bow to his command and fall beneath his feet lift up your heart lift up your voice rejoice!

again I say rejoice! rejoice in glorious hope Jesus the judge shall come and take his servants up to their eternal home we soon shall hear the archangel's voice God's trumpet book shall sound rejoice peace and as we close let's have these words from Jude to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our saviour be glory majesty power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and forever more amen amen well good to have this time together and I look forward to seeing you soon and I look forward to seeing seeing us as it were in person from April the 25th but until then I'll just say bye bye for now bye bye bye