

A song for the king

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[0:00] Three weeks ago we looked at Psalm 1. These are songs in the Bible, Hebrew songs. This one is a song of blessing. It says, The one who delights in the word of the Lord and meditates on the word of the Lord is like a tree planted by streams of water.

Two weeks ago we looked at Psalm 2. The kings and nations rage. And the answer is to install the Messiah, the anointed one. Where?

Zion, which is his holy hill. Yes, so there's a little picture of Zion, the holy hill. There's the city and in the middle of the city is the temple.

And this is the interface between heaven and earth. That's where God meets people in the temple. And that's where people go to meet God. Hence the travelling, which the pilgrims would do to go up the hill to get to the city and get to the temple. And lastly we looked at Psalm 6, which was somebody singing about his agony.

[1:13] Yeah, the man singing was in pain. Yeah, he was the king in pain. But he brought his agony to the Lord in prayer.

And there's a great lesson about the whole matter of suffering. So those are the Psalms that we've looked at. And I'd like you to... Oh, one more click. And it says, for us to sing.

Interesting that that Psalm about this one person's experience is written down with musical instructions for us to sing as well. So we're invited to be part of that and that to be part of our spiritual experience.

So I'm like, oh dear, this didn't work, did it? History changing events. Let's think this morning about history changing events. There are some events that have history changing significance.

The course of the world is changed forever. So the one that came to my mind was the Twin Towers, 9-11, when the hijacked airliners were flown into the United...

[2:25] What was it? United Nations buildings? World Trade Towers, wasn't it? In just a day, just a few hours, everything changed.

So my understanding of it, militant Islam was focused on that hugely aggressive event and made prominent on the world stage. The West, in reaction, was put into retaliation mode, fighting mode. And it affects us. We're still living with that. On Wednesday, I'm going to a meeting of the local council here. And one of the things on the agenda is extremism.

Meaning, I suppose, code for Muslim extremism and violence. And then the counter-reaction of right-wing violence.

So next Wednesday, we're living with the effects of something that happened, 9-11. And here is the claim for Palm Sunday. Another public event.

[3:31] Less violent, but Christians would say more earth-changing. The event is Jesus enters the city, riding on a donkey, stating or staking a clear claim to be the king that the Hebrew scriptures have spoken of.

He makes that claim. He goes to his death. And he rises from the dead. That is a history-changing event.

And one which affects us still in ways that I hope to bring out as we go through. So we're going to look at the psalm that we just read, which, in a most remarkable way, sort of prepares the ground for the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem.

It both propels those events all those years later and interprets them. And, as I say, it affects us today.

That's my introduction. The series is called Singing Salvation. We're going to look at Psalm 118, a song of victory for the king. I think we can sort of do it in sections.

[4:46] Number one, the introduction, which is actually the same as the conclusion. If you've got your Bible open there, it says, Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures forever. And it says that at the end as well, verse 29.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures forever. So there's a literary structure to this. He describes, in verses 5 to 14, the threat he was under.

So we look at that threat. And throughout it, he says, the Lord helped me. We'll look, thirdly, at the triumph of entry, because the king in the psalm seems to come home and back to the city and be received entering the city.

And he talks about entering the gates. And then we'll go back to the conclusion, which was the same as the introduction. And I'd like us to reflect on what that all means, and particularly reflect on what it means for Jesus Christ and reflect upon what it means for us as we read it and as we respond to it.

So here's some people welcoming the king, and they seem to have branches which they wave about. And my PowerPoint doesn't do much in the way of waving, but it will do a spin.

[5:57] What's the point of doing that? So let's look at the introduction. There's the city, just to put that in our minds. The psalm ends where it begins.

It says, this is what it says. Look at it. If you've got a Bible, it's helpful to look at it and you'll see where we're going. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

His love endures forever. The word endures isn't in the original. It's put in there to make the translation work. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

That word good, very rich, and it pops up some other places as well. And here are these people. They're going to be singing this or perhaps saying it. Just to explain the word Lord in capital letters there, is God's specific name in Hebrew.

It relates back to something like I am who I am. That is, you pronounce it Yahweh nowadays. So that's God's own specific Hebrew name.

[7:02] Give thanks to this God, for he is good. His love forever. The love that he refers to is steadfast love.

And there's a particular Hebrew word for that. Meaning love that is promised. Love that doesn't give up. Love that you can absolutely depend on when you're in a hole.

Better word, pit. When you're in a pit, you can depend on the steadfast love of the Lord. And this is where the psalm begins, and this is where it ends.

So I'll just repeat this again. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His steadfast love forever.

And just to make sure we've got the point, Israel is invited to say this. So the people are invited to say, His steadfast love forever.

[8:05] And there's Israel. And the priests, the house of Aaron, so the specifically priestly caste, if you like, are invited to say this. Let the house of Aaron say, His steadfast love forever.

And let those who fear the Lord. So that could be anybody else. He doesn't really limit it. But those who respect this God and are grateful to him, let those who fear the Lord say, His steadfast love forever.

I think it's trying to make a point. Do you think it's trying to make a point? Do you think the point is that we should give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever? I think that's probably what the point is he's trying to make.

His steadfast love is his promised love. And it actually then begins to think, now what has he promised to do? What can we depend upon him to do?

What is the context in which we can depend upon him? And that brings us to this figure, the king, who is now going to tell us how this worked for him.

[9:17] So that's the introduction, and let's take it on a little bit. And now the king starts to tell us, in the first person, I.

Okay, can you see where it says I? Now let's go on from verse 5. In my anguish. Well actually the word means, I was sort of under pressure.

So modern talk we would say, under stress. But this is pressure. So I've got some engineers here this morning, so I must be careful to make sure I get my pressures correct.

He says he's under pressure. And I cried to the Lord. I prayed to the Lord. And he says this is what happened.

He answered by setting me free. The idea of being in a large place where you're not hemmed in. This is the king speaking. I was under pressure.

[10:17] I prayed to the Lord. And he set me free. So let's put a bit more pressure. He set me free. The Lord is with me, he says in verse 6.

I will not fear. It's all sorts of, you pick up the assumptions, you pick up the context, you pick up the way he's thinking, you pick up the conclusions that he's drawing.

I prayed to the Lord, says this king. The Lord is with me. If the Lord is with me, he says, I won't be scared.

That's a wonderful conclusion to draw, isn't it? It has implications on his view of what the Lord is able to do. He seems to be convinced that whatever else the universe throws at him or people throw at him, if he has the Lord with him, the Lord is sufficiently powerful and loyal that he does not need to respond to any of these threats with fear.

Now I would say that is faith and it's probably a growth area for most of us because generally speaking, when we see threats, our response is to be anxious and fearful.

[11:43] That's the human response. But he says, I've come to this conclusion because the Lord is with me. I will not fear. And he goes on to say, I won't fear.

What can man do to me? And you see he's making a, what's the word, a comparison between what human beings have in their capacity to do by way of aggression and harm and what the Lord is able to prevent by reason of his presence.

The Lord is with me. I will not be afraid. By comparison, what can human beings do to me? The Lord is with me. The Lord is with me.

And notice this word, helper. This word's going to crop up quite a few times. The Lord is my helper. And he, the king, says, I will look down.

The word in triumph isn't there in the original. It just seems to be saying, I will look from a position of safety, that's implied, or a position of triumph on the ones who hated me.

[12:56] I will look down on my haters. And from this is drawn the conclusion, verse 8 and 9. The word good is in there, translated for us, better.

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.

So, that's the conclusion that he draws. And this is the king speaking. And he says, this is my experience as king. I am God's king because the claim is that he's a very specific king in God's plan.

And God is with me. I don't have to be afraid. Even if I'm under pressure, God will set me free. The Lord is with me.

I will not fear what man can do to me. So, this is what the king says. Now, the interesting thing is, please, if you've got a spare finger and you can do this without getting in the right pickle, Hebrews 13 is in the New Testament.

[14:05] Don't worry if you can't find it because I will read it to you anyway. And this is many, many years later writing to the little companies of Christian believers.

And in Hebrews 13, he addresses these assemblies and communities of Christians scattered in the Roman Empire or wherever they were.

And he says this. He says, marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept pure for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. He says, keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

Because God has said, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, the Lord is my helper.

I will not be afraid. what can man do to me? Are you duly surprised? Because he's taking there as a quote what the king says and he's saying, we can say that too.

[15:22] And you'll notice how he's using it. He says, because we can say that and the companion verse, verse 5, never will I leave you, never will

I forsake you. Because Christian people share the king's experience of having the Lord with them and being their helper.

He says, this makes all the difference and this is a surprising, to me this is a surprising connection. He says, this makes all the difference to your sexual ethics. Marriage should be honoured by God and the marriage bed kept pure for God will judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral because we can say the Lord is my helper.

I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? And he says, this makes a difference to your financial motivations. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.

So we say with confidence, the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Isn't that surprising? That he takes, first of all, he takes the words from the king and says, we've got them.

And then he takes those words and says, the application of that goes all over the way that you live. So you, in your sexual ethics, sexual integrity is linked up with the fact that the Lord is with us.

[16:49] And your financial worries, you know, people can be worried about money and preoccupied with money when they've got loads of it and people can be preoccupied by money when they've hardly got any of it.

And either way, money begins to dominate. It's a funny thing, isn't it? And he says, that doesn't have to be the case because we say with confidence, the Lord is my helper.

I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Surprising, isn't it? Worth taking home and thinking about that. We can say that. God with us is a key to the way we live all sorts of things in the Christian life.

Okay. Let's move on. Let's move on to the threat that he was under. So this is now in verse 10. And just in case you haven't realized, I'm actually going to go through this psalm bit by bit and explain it as I said.

So, verse 10. All the nations surrounded me. And he's going to say this multiple times in slightly different ways. But just so that we get the point, this was what his situation was.

[18:01] So here is the ancient kingdom of Israel and around are all the nations in their hostility. This has happened all through the history of Israel in one degree or another.

And he says, all the nations surrounded me on every side. So he uses Hebrew styles to imply this. So sometimes he repeats things twice. Sometimes he repeats things three times. We'll see this as we go through. All the nations surrounded me.

But in the name of the Lord, notice the connection with the Lord. In the name of the Lord, I cut them off. So there's the nations. And in a minute, they're going to swarm around like bees.

Verse 11, they surrounded me on every side. Well, actually, that's one of the repetitions where he says, surrounding me, they surrounded me. So I'm surrounded squared. And so the translator says, they surrounded me on every side.

[19:03] Meaning I really was surrounded. But in the name of the Lord, I cut them off. And then he says it again. They surrounded me like bees. But they died out as quickly as burning thorns.

In the name of the Lord, I cut them off. So I went to the trouble of finding a picture of a bee. So there's, he's being surrounded by the nations. He's being surrounded by bees. But he cuts them off. And that word cut off is quite an interesting word, which I think we'll come to in a moment.

No, we won't. We'll do it now. I puzzled over this word because it's said twice, three times, isn't it?

Verse 10, I cut them off. Verse 11, I cut them off. Verse 12, I cut them off.

That's the translation. The word is almost always used of the cut of circumcision. It's a very unusual thing to use it for the cut of, in a battle.

Circumcision, so that's the minor surgery on men which would permanently mark them as Jews.

And I wonder whether this is a little pun or whether we're to make more of it than that, but I'll come back to that in a moment.

[20:17] But I cut them in the name of the Lord, he says. So there is the king acting, not in his own person and with his own purposes and with his own power, but in the name of the Lord, meaning I'm acting with the power of the Lord, I'm acting with the purposes of the Lord, I'm acting with

the person of the Lord with me.

I do this in the name of the Lord. And then in verse 13, he says, this is another repetition, pushing I was pushed. I was pushed back. And I was about to fall.

But the Lord, notice the word, helped me. Very important word. See the position that he was in? He says, they were coming at me from all sides.

I cut them off. They were coming at me from all sides and I was nearly sort of bowed down by it, but the Lord helped me. He really, it was really, I mean, we might say touch and go.

We might say it was really at the end of his tether. We might say things were almost, almost done or he was almost done for, but the Lord helped me.

[21:37] I was very pushed. But the Lord helped me. So let's just, what have I got? The cut them. Yeah, is this the cut of the sword or a cut of whatever the surgeon's knife looks like in circumcision?

I had to guess. I don't know. Circumcision would mean that a non-Jewish man becomes a Jewish man because circumcision is the entry right into being a Jew.

Is that what he means? Does he mean that I'll take these nations which are opposite and against me and I will do something to make them my people? Maybe it means that.

Maybe it means what the translator says. I will, I cut them down. It's worth thinking about that. He says, the Lord is my strength and my song.

He has become my salvation. He's quoting from somewhere. Anybody know where he's quoting from? It's Exodus. It's what happened when they crossed the Red Sea and Pharaoh's armies was destroyed and they sang a song and they all danced around and the song said, the Lord is my strength and my song and has become my salvation.

[23:07] And the king says, it's like that, like that momentous event back in our history, our Israelite history. That's what happened when the Lord rescued me from my enemies.

And then he goes on to say, verse 15, shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous and they say, the Lord's right hand has done mighty things.

And this is going to get repeated as well. So we've said, the name of the Lord is repeated, the help of the Lord is repeated, and here the right hand of the Lord is repeated. And it's very Lord focused, isn't it?

The Lord's right hand has done valiantly. Verse 16, the Lord's right hand is lifted high. The Lord's right hand has done valiantly.

He beats the first one. Something about God's right hand. The right hand is the active hand, isn't it? The right hand is the powerful hand. And he says, I see what's happened.

[24:09] That God's right hand has been at work and this has been an act of God's power. Okay. And then he goes on to say, I will not die, but live and proclaim what the Lord has done.

And he says, I was chastened. I was chastened severely. That's another repetition. Chastening, I was chastened. The Lord really, in God's providence, I was really under it.

It was really on top of me. But, he has not given me over to death. Death nearly got me. But the Lord's right hand was such that I didn't die.

You see where this is going? Perhaps a little bit? Maybe not. Anyway, this is the threat I was under and this is how the Lord helped me, says the king.

And he is, what goes on now? Oh, let's just have a little think about that. So, the king is the one who deals with the nations.

[25:17] The nations surrounded me. I cut them off. Very central figure in the way God deals with the nations.

And of course, as Christians, we are taught that this is actually fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That Jesus is the one who deals first hand with the nations. And, as you're reading this, you might be thinking, well, this is a very interesting history of Israel.

Never knew this. Somewhat interesting. But, it actually becomes international. Because, this figure who is in ancient times the king of Israel, the Christ of Israel, is the one who now deals with Chinese people and Italian people and English people and Scottish people, that there is a direct facing of whatever nation you are with him.

Well, he faces whatever nation you are with his face. So, please don't think it's interesting for them, but it's nothing to do with me. Actually, the claim is that he faces you because you're one nation or another and he's either going to cut you or circumcise you, if I can put it that way.

And notice also the king's close partnership with the Lord, as it is in the psalm. He's hand in hand, hand in glove with the Lord.

[26:53] I pray to the Lord, says the king. I do things in the name of the Lord, says the king. The Lord helps me, says the king. The Lord's right hand is operating with me, says the king.

It's a very close relationship. Now, I know in the history of Israel, that relationship became very wonky and the kings did all sorts of things that God wasn't at all approving of.

But here, in this sort of ideal, it says there's a very, very close relationship between the Lord and the king. And you might, if you know your Bible, you might be thinking where this is going.

Because when Jesus comes on the scene, he fully embraces a closeness of operation between him and the Lord. I mean, right at an early stage, he says, well, did you not know I must be about my father's business?

That was sort of in him from a youngster. I and the father are one, Jesus is going on to say. If you've seen me, says Jesus, you've seen the father.

[28:02] And this closeness of operation is in perfection. In perfection in Jesus. Anyway. Notice, too, the involvement of mighty, earth-shattering, history-changing power.

I cut down the nations, says Jesus, or perhaps I circumcise the nations. The Lord acts in mighty power on the nations.

It's like Exodus, he says. And I want to claim for the fulfillment of this many years later when Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the cross.

I want to claim for that mighty, earth-shattering, history-changing power. And one of the Christian missionaries later, Paul, would say of Jesus dying on the cross, he says, for many people see it as a remarkable display of weakness and foolishness.

A dead Jew on a cross. But Paul says, do you know that act is the act of the greatest power and the greatest wisdom?

[29:21] He says, for the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. And the weakness of God is stronger than the power of men. He says, that act of death on the cross is an act of stupendous power.

Anyway. And the psalm goes on to speak of challenging the power of death, doesn't it? I will not die but live. The Lord chastened me severely but has not given me over to death.

And how much this is fulfilled in Jesus who, as his commentators would say, fulfills this. The king who actually got inside the jaws of death and the jaws of death closed round him and he was dead. He died. He was three days in the tomb. But on the third day, he rose from the dead and he shattered death.

It wasn't just a narrow escape. It was a total defeat death got him and then he shook it off. See, where this psalm is going, the king of rights goes a certain distance along the path, but the end of the path is what Jesus alone does.

[30:44] So let's follow the king now as he goes in verse 19. So he's making his way. I think we have to understand that he's making his way like the pilgrims would have done up to the city and up to the temple.

And he now speaks and he says, open 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 give you thanks for you answered me.

You have become my salvation. He says, that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to head to headquarters as it were from the battlefield. And this is my aim, to go into the place where God is, to where heaven meets earth, and to say, thank you to God.

So my children's talk wasn't just a random, because I couldn't think of anything else. But it's fully in the line of what this psalm is about.

I will come and give thanks to the Lord. verse 22. So I think this is perhaps what the crowd say.

[31:52] Verse 22, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, or literally, the head of the corner. the Lord has done this.

It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. So here's the king coming back from his victory, which they thought he would never achieve. But he comes back from victory, comes back to headquarters to say it, to tell everybody, and everybody says, this is amazing. Here comes the king, and here's the stone that the builders rejected.

The stone the builders, so there's a stone, and let's reject it. So that stone's no good. That stone won't work. That stone is useless.

So we put it on the skip to take it out. The stone that the builders rejected, and they say, this is what happened. This stone, let's see if this will work, has become the head of the corner.

[32:57] Yes, the most important stone. So I presume in this little bit of engineering, this is like the keystone that either holds it all together, or gives you the line of the building so all the angles work out correctly.

This stone that was rejected has now become the most important stone. And actually Jesus quotes this himself.

Not long after the entry to Jerusalem, he's doing some debating with people, and he says, have you never read this? This psalm, have you never read it?

Where it says the stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. Never read that. And of course his listeners would have read it of course, but they never made the connection. And Jesus is sort of saying, well actually you're exactly doing what this says, because Jesus was about to be arrested and crucified, rejected.

And then God would raise him up and say he is the most important person in the world. And Jesus is saying, this is actually what's happening. Have you not read this? The stone the builders rejected has become the most important stone, the capstone.

[34:10] And the people singing the psalm, back to Psalm 118, they say, this is fantastic. It is marvellous in our eyes. The Lord has done this.

It is marvellous in our eyes. I always remember the Hebrew word for marvellous because it's Pele. And Pele was or is or was a Brazilian footballer who would do the most amazing shots and bend them round and go like that.

Wah, fantastic. And here we've got the same sort of idea of fantastic. The Lord has done this and it is marvellous. How did the Lord bend it round like that?

How did the Lord manage to achieve a goal from such a huge distance away from the line? It's marvellous what the Lord has done. It's marvellous in our eyes.

And this day, the day that the king enters here, this is the most fantastic day. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. So I think that's yes.

[35:13] So this is what the crowd say. And then we go on to verse 25 where they say, 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.

Now I've left some of my notes behind but I have a feeling it goes something like this. So the save us, now you have to excuse me because I'm not very professional in this, the saving word is something like yasha, from which Yahshua, Joshua, from which Jesus actually, so Jesus' name is linked to this ancient word for saving.

And the, now how the ho gets in there is beyond me, but it's ho, yasha, and then anna, which is repeated here three times, it means please, or we beseech you.

So it said save us, please, save us, please, grant us success, please, and it gets contracted to hosanna, hosanna.

Save us, please, save us, please, hosanna, hosanna, hosanna. And that's what the crowds say on the Palm Sunday, isn't it? Hosanna to the King of Kings, we sang it, you sang it, hosanna to the Son of David, save us, please, save us, please, please, save us.

[36:44] And that's what they're praying, or claiming, or shouting, as the King enters, and this is quoted of Jesus. And let me just look this one up, because I can't quite remember what it says.

I think that people say to him, let's just see, 21, 42, no, what have I got?

No, I think I've got the wrong quote there. I'm thinking, that should be 21, 16, where the chief priests and the teachers of the law come up to Jesus and say, look, rabbi, will they say rabbi?

No, they don't. They just say to him. Even the kids are running around saying, Hosanna to the son of David. They're running up and down saying, Hosanna to the son of David. This can't be right. Shut them up. Tell them to be quiet.

And Jesus says, absolutely not, because there is something totally right, even about the little children running up and down saying, Hosanna.

[37:53] Have you never read from the lips of children and infants your ordained praise? And in another place Jesus is asked to shut them up and he says, if they didn't say Hosanna, the stones would say it for them.

Such a right thing to be saying. so let's take him in as he goes in the gates and has said in verse 25, Lord, save us, 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. He has made his light shine on us. And blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

That's what they shouted at Jesus when he rode along in the donkey all those years later. They must have known what they were doing. Do you think they did? Do you think they realized how well this psalm fitted Jesus?

It says in John's gospel that the disciples only put two and two together later. It was then that they realized that they had done these things to Jesus.

[38:59] But anyway, these are the things they said, these are the things they did. And here he comes. It's quoted by the crowds. And now we get this sentence, end of verse 27, with bows in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

That's what it says in the translation that most of us have got. Anybody got a different translation? Of course there are different translations.

There's only a few words and they're sort of expanded to make sense in the translation. If we've all got that, let's go with that.

With bows in hand. So meaning that we've got, they didn't have banners and bunting like we might use now, but they would have just got some branches from the trees and waved them around.

With bows in hand, we join the procession, so they process up through the city, through the gates in the city to the very central place which is the temple and to the central feature of the temple or to the key feature of the temple.

[40:24] And the key feature is the altar. Now architecture is an interesting thing. It gives a message. So sometimes people who come into our church building here for the first time feel a little bit disappointed because we've got no carvings, we've got no portraits, we've got no icons, and we don't have an altar.

Now if you go to St Bartholomew's church, just down the corner there, they have an altar, really gold and everything. We don't have an altar. An altar is a place where you make sacrifices, particularly where you make animal sacrifices.

We don't have an altar because we believe that the sacrifice has already been made and we don't need to repeat it. But here in these Old Testament times, they were making sacrifices and the king goes to the place of sacrifice and they would have sacrificed animals, so there's a sheep which is going to die and it's going to be cut up and burnt on the altar.

And that is the destination that the king is headed to. We go up to this place of sacrifice. It seems to me absolutely extraordinary how completely this matches that week so many years later where Jesus came in on the donkey, they waved branches at him, he was chastened, he was grabbed and brought to death.

But that death was not random, tragic, a miscarriage of justice. It was a sacrifice.

[42:26] That's the nature of that death. that what God illustrated through the death of animals, a death occurs so that sin can be forgiven because sin deserves death.

What was illustrated even in this psalm, that's where they head to the place of sacrifice Jesus did in real life and on the good Friday they nailed him to a cross and he stayed there while the son refused to sign and while everything went dark and while he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

That's what happened. It was a sacrifice and it just seems to me absolutely extraordinary how this psalm sets this all up and Jesus totally fulfills it.

This is Christianity. This is what it's all about. With bows in hand, join the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

Which brings us to the final couple of verses. It begins where it ends. You are my God, I will give you thanks. You are my God, I will exalt you.

[43:44] Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love forever. These, this pressure the king was under, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever.

Maybe you're under pressure this morning and you think, it's getting at me from all sides. But one day have faith, you will say, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is forever.

And how he was helped by God, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever. And how even he came unto death but was delivered from it, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever.

That's what he says, is the motto, is the motto. The words that stand over the whole psalm. It's fulfilled in exactly what we have seen here and it's fulfilled in exactly what Jesus did and exactly what was done to him in history.

So, let's reflect on it. So, I've gone through the psalm and I just wanted to have a couple of reflections. So, the first reflection is about Jesus. He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and they did these things to him, whether accidentally or deliberately, unknowingly, but certainly significantly.

[45:21] The things that were happening to Jesus were not random and meaningless. They were meaningful, history changing.

They said things to Jesus, the crowd called out things to Jesus, whether they knew what they were saying, whether they realized that when they took the branches on Palm Sunday they were exactly fulfilling this psalm, whether they thought Jesus was going to knock out the occupying Romans, whatever their understanding of it, this is what they said.

And I think it's very, very remarkable. And if you're somewhat skeptical about the Bible and you've got this thought that people say the Bible is full of contradictions, I'm not actually sure, I've read the Bible quite a lot of times, I'm not really quite sure there are many contradictions in the Bible, there might be difficult bits, but certainly not full of contradictions, but get this, it is full of fulfillment, this is a remarkable fulfillment, something written hundreds and hundreds of years before, fulfilled so precisely later on.

Something about Jesus now, I hope this will work. Let's reflect on you and me. In this psalm, there are different people speaking, different people taking different lines, different responses, and I'd like to ask which one you would be, or would have been.

So first of all, let's be exhaustive about this. Would you say that you would say, I identify with the king? Oh, right, it was a rhetorical question, but anyway, okay.

[47:11] Let's just think about this, the king. So the king is the most important person in the universe, the king is the one who decides the fate of all nations, the king is the judge, and you say, well, who would dare put up their hand and say, I identify with the king?

But you're right, because the king's people share in his privileges. It's an amazing thing. We are enthroned with him, Christian people.

The iron rod that he has in the book of Revelation, we have. And the promises that he took comfort in. The Lord is with me, I will not be afraid, what can man do to me?

New Testament says, yeah, that's you, count on it. So, yes, Hebrews 13 says that we can be, we can identify with the king.

Now, let's be realistic, there are people who are enemies of the king. men. This doesn't give us a sort of, I suppose, in my limited knowledge of Buddhism, I think it would say all is one.

[48:32] There's no actual conflict and distinction when you come down to things. But here it doesn't do that. It says, when you come down to things, there are actually two sides, for the king and against the king.

And the king has enemies. And they attack the king from many directions. And he still has enemies. They attack the king from north, south, east, and west.

People nowadays attack the king aggressively. So there are some countries where Christians are put in prison for being Christians. Politely.

Like Richard Dawkins, who was introduced, I think, by Joan Bakewell, on one of the, I think, from the, where do they have the book festival?

Something on Y. Hay on Y. And she introduced him and said, he's always very good humoured in his comments on believers. It was actually merciless and mocking, actually.

[49:31] There was nothing good humoured about it. Enemies of the king, politely, crudely, or very intellectually. And people fall into that category as enemies of the king.

And strangely, even the builders are his enemies, the people who are supposed to be building the kingdom. Remember the stone that the builders rejected has become of the head of the corner? I think that's religious people. There are people who are supposed to be building the house who reject the king. That's shocking, isn't it? People who are supposed to be on his side who reject him. In those days, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. If I dare say, nowadays, people who think you still make sacrifices. Because there is not that the sacrifice has already been made.

Some Christian churches think you still have to add sacrifices. That can't be right, can it? The stone the builders rejected, the builders his enemies. People who say they're Christians, sadly.

[50:41] So I ask, would you line up with the enemies? Would you have been the cheering crowd? In Jesus' time, people cheered him as he went into Jerusalem.

They got carried away. It was like a festival, like a carnival. But a few days later, another crowd, perhaps a different one, but maybe the same, shouted, crucify him.

So these are people that get caught up with something temporarily, think it's great, and then change their minds. I had a ministerial friend who said, I like people to become Christians.

I pray for people to become Christians, but I pray they won't be converted quickly, he said. He said, because if they're converted quickly, they can change their minds quickly.

So I prefer them to think about it and be converted with a real good solid foundation. Anyway, that's by the by. So I could ask you whether you have Christian faith.

[51:50] That's what I'm entitled to ask you. Is it the sort of faith that you just like being with other people and the fun of that? Or is it the sort of faith that is deeper, that will last through challenges and battles?

And there are people here that are truly thankful. People, you know, they got the idea, didn't they? Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love forever. So I can ask you whether you're one of those people.

I don't think it's quite so easy to be that because it takes an act of faith and an act of almost of choice to say this is the way I'm going to see my life. I could go through all the things that are problematic and be miserable about it or I could say actually the Lord has been good and I will be thankful.

And they say it out loud. They tell other people to say it. They learn lessons, they say in verse 8 or 9, yeah, I've learned something, it's better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.

One of those people who learns lessons you go through. They claim the Lord's deeds, shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous. The Lord's right hand has done mighty things, they say.

[53:03] Do you do that? somebody that would say about how good God is given the opportunity? They marvel at the reversal. The Lord has done this, it is marvelous in our eyes.

They think that is, God is amazing. One of those people. They repeatedly pray for success, oh Lord save us, Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna.

One of those people. Great. To be praying, Lord, you are great, you are good, save. Save now, save we ask.

And they're marked by thankfulness. You my God, I will give you thanks. You my God, I will exalt you. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever.

Thank you Lord. Amen. Let's sing, now we'll sing Psalm 118. Thank you. Thanks to God for he is good.

[54:14] The everlasting giver, let all his people praise the Lord whose love endures forever. And at the end of this song we will remain standing for a closing prayer and then there's some tea and coffee afterwards so please don't feel you have to rush away.

Thank you.