

Psalm 130

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[0 : 0 0] is Psalm 130, a song of ascents. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

I wait for the Lord. My soul waits, and in his word I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Well, good morning. So great to see you here today, and wonderful to have so many of you joining us online. You know, by this Thursday, you will be somewhere at a table, and some of you will be asked, what do you have to be grateful for? Give us a word on something that you are thankful for. Even if you're alone and not at a bountiful table with others, your mind on Thursday afternoon will be asking the question, or what do I have to give thanks?

I want to answer that from Psalm 130. God hears me, and in this I have hope. Just put that tagline in your mind so that by Thursday it will be brought to remembrance. God hears me, and in this I have hope.

In the year 1914, Ernest Shackleton and 27 crew members set sail from England in an effort to cross the Atlantic, the Antarctic over land. The Queen Mother had given Shackleton a Bible, and in the fly leaf she had written these words, may the Lord help you to do your duty and guide you through all the dangers of land and sea. May you see the works of the Lord and all his wonders in the deep.

[2 : 4 6] What awaited Shackleton and his men at the bottom of the globe was utter desolation and then despair. Within five months they were castaways, their ship, their vessel having been crushed by the ice itself, and they were literally in a fight for survival. They had seen all the wonders of the Lord's deep. I almost feel as though the opening line in Psalm 130 could be a journal entry written by Shackleton or one of his men. Take a look at it again. Out of the depths I cried to you,

O Lord, O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy. Does God hear you? Out of the depths, the writer begins, I cry to the Lord. The depths in the scriptures are almost universally used in reference to the watery deeps. They are an image of absolute personal anguish and despair.

It is the image of the desperation of a drowning person. To be crying from the depths is to be recalling the anguish of even one like Jonah who cries to the Lord from the very bottom of the ocean.

The depths then capture the anguish of a soul overwhelmed. They articulate the question, does God hear?

[5 : 1 5] The surprise of Psalm 130 is not that the songwriter, though, is speaking from a place of anguish. We have seen this throughout, have we not?

No, we have seen the songwriter in the Psalms of the sense continually crying out to the Lord in a state of anguish.

In Psalm 120, he cried out to the Lord over the strain of living in an evil world. In Psalm 21, he cried out to the Lord with the evil that was all around.

In Psalm 123, he cried out to the Lord because there was such contempt that he felt from outsiders. In Psalm 124, he cried out to the Lord because the enemies were around him.

And notice, just glancing your eye across the page, in Psalm 124, verses 5 and 6, you actually have the depths, the deeps, where he's worried about being overrun by the torrents and the raging waters swallowing him up.

[6 : 23] No, the surprise of Psalm 130 is not that we have one crying out in anguish. It's that he's crying out in anguish concerning his own sin.

Now, this is new. In this Songs of the Sense. The voice and plea for mercy, verse 2, is articulated by the way of iniquity, verse 3.

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? The prayer of the psalmist today, then, is an anguished soul overwhelmed by a sense of guilt concerning his own sin.

It's almost an evaluation of his own life's expedition. His own soul feels like a ship's vessel that is caught in the flows, the shifting ice that rests under the globe.

His own heart is in the state of anguish, as though the vibrations that work their way across the ice at the bottom of the earth, making their eerie and ghostly sounds, and the capturing of his soul in the tight grip of that, and the gripping of it, the twisting of it, the grinding of it, the breaking of it, is almost as though he feels there is nowhere for him to go concerning his own soul and his own guilt and what he's overrun by.

[8 : 29] And so he says, If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? The idea of standing is a judicial one. Who could appear in your presence? Given the expedition of my own life, the failure of my own ways.

Then he says, If you should mark iniquities, literally there, the word mark is fascinating. It's the sense of, If you should take careful watch over, if you should look upon, if you should gaze upon me, spiritually undressed, O Lord God, who could, in a judicial sense, stand before you with any hope?

See, this is the beauty of what poetry does. I know that I speak to many men and women today, and children who are analytical in mind. There's the right brain, and there's the left brain, and I'm not sure which is which.

You know I don't. But the analytical mind, of course, is always wondering about the artistic bent of the writer, and the poets, and the artist, who feels things with such depth.

And yet, that individual needs the poet, who can capture with words, the anguish of a soul, that ought to arrest you, arrest your mind first, if not your heart, with the true condition of your heart.

[9 : 58] I think it was Walker Percy, who said something to the fact that the creative one, the artistic one, for that one, a touch is a blow. For that one, a sound is a noise.

And the artist, who has put these words to pen and paper, says, out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord, hear my voice, be attentive to the voice of my pleas, for mercy, for my soul, my life, my journey, is sinking in the icy waters, without a hope, in the world.

The anguish, of the soul. Have you felt that? Think about it for a minute.

We feel all kinds of things deeply. We are quickly incensed at the evils around us. We are ready to be on our feet and out our door.

But when is the last time we were on our face in the quiet of our own home?

[11 : 26] When is, when is the moment that captured our attention enough where we looked in the mirror rather than through the window? Or is it that we don't want to look in the mirror?

But this song is asking you to look in the mirror and not out the window. It's asking you to gaze upon your own soul, not merely upon your own city.

It's asking you to ask the question, who could stand before God if he were to mark my iniquities as they truly are?

Think about it. If you were to number your sins, says one writer, according to the conscious moments of your existence, he writes, they would be as numerous as the seconds in which you live. Because never have we fully loved God as we ought. Never have we completely loved our neighbor as ourself. Never have we ourselves been in a position of righteousness before him.

[12 : 35] And what the writer is saying is that ought to grip you at some point with such strength that you feel the very things that he has put down into words.

I just ask you, do you know the anguish of this soul? Have you asked yourself, can God hear me given what he knows of me?

fortunately, the anguish of the soul gives way in verse 4 to the God of the Bible and it indicates that there's some reasonable expectation of help.

look at verse 4. It really is the moment of turning from anguish to expectation. but with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.

This is the Bible's claim that with God there is an opportunity for forgiveness. forgiveness. The word forgiveness here literally means pardon.

[14 : 08] A pardon. To be pardoned. it falls on the heels of who can stand before you as judge and yet I know that as judge you pardon.

Now you and I love to play armchair quarterback on a Monday morning at the close of every president's term in office.

the executive branch has the unique privilege of pardoning anyone that they feel they would like to and we sit around and wonder who's worthy of being pardoned and who's not and usually there's some sense that the judgment was overly severe so the pardon is warranted or if it wasn't that the judgment was so severe that the pardon is warranted it's that the sense is that within this individual we now know that the lesson has been learned and they'll make a contribution to society and therefore a pardon is granted not innocence declared but a pardon is granted and the writer is now saying that with God forgiveness can be had pardon can be granted and believe me there is no one worthy there is no judicial pardon from God on your life or life or mine that anyone would be able to say well the judgment of

God on him or her was too severe or the opportunities that God would have if this individual were pardoned are clear there's no sense that the stain that is within us will be overcome by us every pardon of sin is the irrevocable merciful act of God that is absolutely free completely gracious and undeserved in each and in every respect and yet he says with you there is pardon it's the same language in Leviticus 4 and 5 when they would bring the sin offering and the sin offering would come and the declaration would be made by the high priest your pardon your sin is forgiven this is I think you're hearing me move toward why you this

Thursday might be able to say God hears me and in this I have hope because in the scriptures he is hearing the anguished soul lamenting their sin and landing with a but with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared that I might live rightly before you that I might have a proper reverence for you you know even this word pardon in modern Hebrew so I have read no expert here this same word that's here in the Hebrew is what someone would say when they say excuse me or you and I would say pardon me this sense of being excused by God is the expectation of the writer and that expectation of pardon comes from what he knows about

[17 : 45] God that with God forgiveness can be yours and so what he knows about God gives way in the text verses five and six to this anticipated waiting and watching do you see that I wait for the Lord my soul waits and in his word I hope my soul waits for the Lord more than a watchman for the morning more than a watchman for the morning you can almost feel as though the songwriter is now no longer just crying out in the depths of an anguished soul but now on the edge of their seat once trying to hide from God and wondering whether they could stand before God to now ready ready for God the question of course is in one sense the writer doesn't say when this will happen I wait for the Lord my soul waits There's this strange moment of when is not given!

He simply told to wait he is waiting and then he describes through this simile in the text what that waiting looks like isn't this just wonderful it's a waiting that resembles the watchman on look for the morning no more than the watchman for the morning more than the watchman for the morning in fact the word here watchman is almost this in noun form what the verb was earlier in regard to if God should watch out over our sins if God should mark my iniquities he actually was thinking in one sense earlier if God was watching over my sins now the writer saying I'm watching out for God I'm going to wait for God in fact I'm waiting on you I'm watching you my eyes are on you because I know you get forgiveness and I'm not going anywhere until the sun rises on my soul what an eager expectation what a confident positioning the waiting and the watching the subtlety of the song and he might not say when it will happen but he does say how did you see it in the text verse five I wait for the Lord my soul waits and in his word I hope this I'm waiting in the darkness of my soul over my own sin for an oracle from God for a word for a declaration thou art pardon thy sins are forgiven he's waiting he's waiting on a word in fact that that word of expectation for Israel took some time to find fulfillment notice in the text how it closes that last wonderful stanza in one sense from anguish of soul to expectation for forgiveness to this escalation of the kind of excess that this forgiveness would bring notice what he says oh

Israel hope in the Lord for with the hope with the Lord their steadfast love and with him is plentiful redemption and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities notice the expectation now for forgiveness wasn't just for the songwriter it was for all Israel and the expectation wasn't just that

you're going to get something good from God to praise him for on Thursday some temporal provision no you're going to get you're going to get something plentiful from God there it is for seven plentiful redemption you're going to get something that is not just for you but for all look at verse eight he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities each and every one of them in other words for every moment you've drawn breath he will forgive!

you for each second in which we have never fully loved him or our neighbor as ourselves he will forgive you and it's just builds with this buoyancy of soul that says God can do this not only for me but for anyone and he will do it he holds out that hope in other words the psalm clearly argues!

[22 : 49] God hears me and in this do I hope so the only question remaining I suppose is how?

how will a righteous God forgive a sinful person in ways that retain his justice yet put on display his mercy how can the song I sing at thanksgiving be that God hears me God helps me God redeems me!

God God will pardon me! God will God to hear the word! God will hear! God will hear God hear! God God God pardon! God! God! God pardon! God pardon! God pardon! God Let me close it by mentioning three things not only does the text promise when God will pardon but the Bible begins to show you how God pardons it begins with what's coming called Christmas in Luke chapter two and I would encourage you to peruse it over the week there is an aged man and an elderly woman in the temple of Israel and on two occasions Luke is indicating!

They are waiting get this for the consolation of Israel they are still waiting they're waiting for God to bring a word that Israel's sins would be redeemed and there's every indication in the text of the New Testament with the Gospels that we are hearing the how and the when with the arrival of the infant at Christmas because aged Simeon says now with this child coming into the temple now the consolation of Israel has come now your word is fulfilled now I can depart in peace and Anna says and what

[25 : 38] Simeon senses for himself she begins to make known for everyone she begins to speak of everyone who also had been looking for the consolation of Israel that this child is the one in whom God begins to secure that which Psalm 130 longs for let me give you a second moment not just in Christmas but as Jesus own ministry commences in Mark's gospel chapter two Jesus winds up in a house of overflowing numbers and a paralytic is let down through the ceiling and at the time of the commencement of his ministry Jesus says something very interesting you expect him to say get up and walk I heal you but what Jesus says surprisingly is son your sins are forgiven it's a word it's a declaration it's a it's a time in which

God looks upon him and absolves him of his guilt now that's a fascinating thing to think about that Jesus claims to be able to forgive sins only God forgives sins but he comes not only through his infancy at the time of the consolation of Israel but at the commencement of his ministry through this word saying this is why I've come to forgive sins now think of it this way in the old testament very few people had that direct oracle that kind of declaration placed upon them David had it once from Nathan David had it when he had gone into Bathsheba and Nathan comes to him and tells him what's going to happen but then there has come a point with David's repentance where Nathan says to him your sins are forgiven but that's the forgiveness to a king who is there's a second time where almost that exact phrase your sins are forgiven are placed in the old testament and it's to Isaiah in chapter 6 on his call into ministry that the tongs comes to his lips and his iniquities are forgiven so that not only can the king do his deal David but the prophet can do what he has to do because now he has to have his sins forgiven and then a third time in Zechariah through Joshua the high priest that the priest is going to change his garments to be an effectual priest before the people and the declaration is made in the book of Zechariah your sins are forgiven and years ago when I was reading with Andrew Zulker the gospel of Mark we came across that insight that in the old testament the king had his sins forgiven my gosh he better if he's going to represent the people the prophet had his sins forgiven my gosh he better have his sins forgiven if he's going to speak before the people the priest had his sins forgiven if he's going to offer sacrifices for the people and Jesus now comes to the paralytic and says my son you're sins are forgiven what Jesus is saying is that anyone and everyone that finds their way under the word of

Christ can be forgiven all your sins all of them thank you Lord what a beautiful image not only at the dedication of Christ at the temple but through the commencement of his ministry it ought to be swelling in your own soul with actual hope actual help and then on the cross then on the cross Christmas his commencement and the cross he looks out upon those who are killing him those

where this judgment is falling upon him and he says father finish it for me forgive them for they know not what they do that he takes in himself the depths of the icy deep that you might take in his death life and pardon before the father now when you come then to thanksgiving what you have is an understanding through the scriptures that God hears you and in this you have hope because the word has been fulfilled in his son which now gives you access from the depths of your own sin the inability that you have to free yourself from the ice flows that are crushing you are now transformed as you trust in his word place your faith in

Christ and become his own son or daughter I would ask you today to do that I would pray that some who are under the sound of my voice with this day this moment see it clearly perhaps the most analytical of minds in our presence would be moved by the poetic discourse of the songwriter who has arrested your mind with the realities of your sin which you so seldom face and that you would run to the word that you are forgiven in Christ not only that but for those of you who like me did that a long time ago that we would have not only access to God but we would remember this week that we have assurance we have assurance that God hears and in this is your hope

[31 : 41] Thomas Cranmer who assisted the church in her worship thought about the prayers of the church that would provide assurance of their salvation and he writes to Christ our Lord who loves us and washed us in his own blood and made us the kingdom of priests through him let us offer continually the sacrifice of praise and with faith in him come boldly before the throne of grace and humbly confess our sins to God isn't that beautiful the anguish of soul the expectation of help the hope in Christ won't you come won't you this week praise his name give thanks you know in the old old old days back even when

I'm talking as old as people that could be my grandparents they had something called the sawdust trail they'd have meetings like this outside and because the weather was always so inconsistent you know you put sawdust down on the dirt because if it was a if it was really hot windy no one would want to sit for long unless the floor was settled but if it was really rainy and blustery well you needed a little something firm under your feet they would hear a word from the Lord that would offer access to God through the sacrifice of Christ they would basically say you know are you going to walk that sawdust trail I'm just going to ask you that analogically why not today why not now gain access to God through faith in Christ so that you can praise him come to

Christ find assurance in Christ gain access to God through Christ I'm going to invite anyone here who would like access to God through faith in Christ to just come I'll stand here even as we sing our final hymn I'll pray with you who would love it today if you gave your life to Christ and I would love it if everyone here understood clearly the assurance that Christ brings so that you can say with the psalmist God hears me and in him do I put my hope our heavenly father we now stand to sing again and I pray that the song of psalm 130 would move the minds and the hearts of all who have heard him in the name of

Jesus amen to Thank you.