

PM Psalm 130

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[0 : 00] So let us now turn to the Word of God, and this evening we're going to be looking together at Psalm 130. If you're using the Church Bibles, I think it's on page 623.

So we're going to read through Psalm 130 together and see what it has to say to us. So Psalm 130 from the beginning.

A song of ascents.

Amen. 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.

[1 : 23] Amen. And may God bless the reading of his holy inspired Word to us this evening. So every day on a Tuesday and a Wednesday and a Thursday, I get off my train at Waverley Station.

I head up out onto Market Street and begin my march up the mound towards ETS where I will study for the day. And on that road, as you may be aware, is the Edinburgh Dungeons.

You know, the tourist attraction that you have on that street. And they have an interesting sign on the door to their gift shop. I don't know if you've been to Edinburgh recently or if you've even paid attention when you were there.

I know obviously COVID and stuff has affected travel. But do you know what that sign says on the door of Edinburgh Dungeon? It says, all sinners welcome.

And, you know, I know they're telling a little joke about that. But, you know, it did get me thinking seeing this every day on my way to and from theological studies.

[2 : 28] There's that big sign on the street in Edinburgh saying, all sinners welcome. I know if you walk up to most churches, they'll have a signpost outside.

You know, telling you the name of the church, the denomination, you know, who the minister is, if they have one currently. What the service times are, you know, useful bits of information like that.

But also quite commonly, they'll have a little slogan or a verse or something. I've seen some that say things like, Jesus Christ is Lord. Or, you know, John 3.16 or some other verse like that.

It's a popular thing to do. But I got me thinking every day, walking past this sign, saying, you know, what would happen if alongside all these things on our signs for our churches, we put the words, all sinners welcome.

What would happen if we did that? It would be interesting to see. Because ultimately, that is what the church is for, isn't it? It's a place for sinners to go and hear the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[3 : 35] And find salvation in him. And after all, all of us are sinners, unfortunately. We don't want to be. But that's the way we are.

So in a way, it would make sense for churches to say that, wouldn't it? You know, all sinners are welcome in this church because we're all sinners. And so everyone is welcome.

And this psalm, Psalm 130, in one sense, serves as a signpost for sinners too. Because it's telling us that there is a hope for those who are lost in their sin.

Sin is described in the Bible as the transgression of the law of God and rebellion against him. And all of us have done something along those lines.

Whether we are aware of it or not, all of us have sinned. If you've ever lied or cheated or stolen something, even something so insignificant, that's all it takes.

[4 : 39] That's the bad news, isn't it? That we're all sinners. That we've all sinned against God. But of course, there is good news. And that's why we are here today, to hear the good news. So let's look at that together.

We're going to have three points then from Psalm 130. Because it wouldn't be a sermon without three points, would it? So we've got a sinner who cries out. A sinner who waits. And a sinner who hopes.

Now before we start, I want to begin with a story. Now it's a much better story than the one I told this morning. Although it has a bit of a dark beginning. But you'll have to wait and see to figure out how it ends.

So there's a story about a man. A man called Alec Campbell. Now Alec Campbell was a regular soldier in the British Army. Who was sent to France at the beginning of World War II. Along with so many others.

And then of course, shortly afterwards, France fell to the German invasion. And so the British and Allied troops were evacuated. And now this again, this is another story we're all very familiar with.

[5 : 37] The story of Dunkirk and all those little boats that made that huge monumental effort to rescue the soldiers from that beachhead. Well, Alec didn't make it to Dunkirk.

Instead, he was evacuated some days later from another part of western France. At the western port of Le Havre. Where about 140 odd thousand soldiers were rescued.

So about half the amount from Dunkirk. But still a monumentously large amount. Now, we understand that Alec made it to St. Nazir. He made it to the port where he was meant to be.

He got on board a large boat, a large vessel. Which may have been the RMS Lancastria. But unfortunately, before the ship was able to set sail for safer waters.

An enemy plane flew overhead. Dropped a bomb. Which went down the smokestack of the ship. Blew up the boilers. The ship, of course, blew in half. And then sank in just a matter of minutes.

[6 : 42] And Alec, along with so many others, were plunged into the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean. And not sure if he would ever see the light of day again. And I'm going to leave it on a cliffhanger.

And we're going to finish the story at the end. Because that's how we all like to do things, isn't it? So we have first, then, a sinner who cries out. I love the way this psalm begins.

Because it comes from a place where we've all been, I'm sure, at some point in our lives. That first two verses. 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. Out of the depths.

Now I'm pretty sure that at some point in our lives, each of us today has felt like we're in the depths. That we're drowning in the deep sea. That when the psalmist wrote this, I'm sure that's what he was feeling.

[7 : 50] That sense of being just overwhelmed. Of drowning. Of knowing just how imperfect you are. Of knowing how far you've fallen short of God.

And feeling, there's nothing anyone can ever do. I've burnt my bridges. There's no hope for me. That inability to escape. This can happen if you're a Christian.

It can happen if you're not. It's just the way that God works in our lives sometimes. But we all sometimes become so aware, really, just of how far we have fallen short.

It happens to me at times. I'm sure it happens to you. Maybe you have done something truly awful to someone you love.

Maybe you've hurt somebody. Maybe you've dearly offended God. Maybe you've said something about God that you really shouldn't have in just a fit of anger or despair. Maybe you've just, you're like, oh no, what have I done?

[9 : 00] Do you ever think it's all over? That's it, I've stepped one too many steps over the line. That's it, that's me. I'm done for. There's no forgiveness left for me. I've used up all my credits.

I'm done for. From the depths I cry. What does the psalmist say though? He says, oh Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas. For mercy. Oh Lord, hear my voice.

Hear my cries, oh Lord. Don't forget me. Please don't let me go. Don't ignore me. I still need you. Something else here that's really cool.

You know, I'm a theology student. I find these things cool. And you're reading your Bible in the English. It's not always very clear. But if you look at the way that Lord is spelt in verse 1.

[10 : 02] Compared to how it's spelt in verse 2. If you're reading the church Bible, some may be slightly different. Depending on your translation. But the ESV certainly has the first Lord in chapter 1 in capital letters.

The L-O-R-D. Compared to the Lord beginning of verse 2. Which is just the normal, how you'd expect it to be written. Now when you see this. When you see Lord spelled all in capitals in your Bible.

What this means here is that when this was written in Hebrew. Well, the word that was being used here is God's personal name. It's God's covenant name.

The name Yahweh. That he said to Moses at the burning bush. You know, I am who I am. That wonderful name of God. That covenantal name of God. That proves his faithfulness for all generations.

The true, the proper name of God. So when the psalmist is crying out to God. He's not doing so to God he doesn't know. Or to some unknown God. Or some unknown force.

[11 : 05] He's using God's proper, real name. That's an amazing thing. Some people think you can't do that. It's, you know, it's blasphemy to say the name of God.

And yet it's a privilege we have as God's children. That we can call upon him. Not just as our Father in heaven. I mean, that's amazing enough. But also we can use his name.

He's given us his name. He's shown us part of who he is. The psalmist boldly calls on the name of God itself. As we can do tonight. It's a wonderful, wonderful privilege.

Something else that's really great about this psalm. It starts off in such a dark place. You know, out of the depths I cry to you. Lord, I'm just lost. I'm drowning. I'm sinking. But the psalmist knows.

He knows in his heart that there is forgiveness. Because that's the very next thing he cries out. He knows God forgives. He knows God is merciful. Verse 3 it says, If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities.

[12 : 10] O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness. That you may be feared. The psalmist knows, like any of us know, I'm sure.

That if God looked at his life. Looked at all the things he'd said and done and thought. Then he would have been lost. He was doomed. Because we all do evil things.

O Lord, who could stand? No one could. That's the scary truth. No one could stand. Imagine your life being written down in a record book or made into a film. Everything you'd ever thought or said or done for your entire life.

Perfectly recorded for all of history. And then when our day finally comes. When we pass from this life into the next. And we stand before God. And we say, God, look at me.

I'm such a good person. And God opens the book and says, no you're not. You really think you've done nothing wrong. What about this? You said this then. You did this then.

[13 : 15] And that's the scary truth. Many people think they'll just get to heaven for being a relatively good person. But the reality is that's not how it works.

This part of the psalm really is a warning. It's saying that God, if he looks really at you. And sees who you really are.

And sees your sins. Then you cannot stand. Because God does keep a record of sins. And no one ever could stand before him on their own merit.

That's the bad news, isn't it? And then of course we have the good news. Only one man can stand before God on his own merit. And that's Jesus. And through Jesus there is forgiveness with God.

Because with God there is forgiveness. With you there is forgiveness, the psalmist says. He knows it. Even in his despair.

[14 : 23] He knows the good news. That there is forgiveness. That is what God promises to all those who come to him in faith.

That when we stand up before God with that book of our lives. Jesus comes and takes that book away. And puts his in its place. So when God looks at our lives.

He sees Christ's perfect life and sacrifice. And he says. Well done good and faithful servant. When we trust in Jesus.

When we put our faith in him. Our slate is wiped clean. That's what happens. When you put your faith in Christ. We can stand before God that day.

We will be able to stand. Because of what Christ has done for us. Because he served our sentence for us. On the cross. It's very sombering to think that the perfect son of God.

[15 : 26] Was given the punishment that we are owed. For the sins that we committed. Not his own. Because he had none. But he did that. So that we.

Who have sinned. Could be forgiven. With God there is forgiveness. Forgiveness. It's a beautiful thing.

It's a remarkable thing. To think that God. Did that for you. And for me. Despite all the rubbish I've done. What love that is. So knowing that.

It's only right and proper. That having received this forgiveness. As a gift from God. Again nothing we could do. To earn it. That we turn to him.

To be filled with hearts of worship. And praise. And thanksgiving. Say Lord thank you. Thank you for what you've done.

[16 : 23] Lord I want to serve you with my life. Whatever place you've put me. I want to serve you. I want to glorify you. Because you've done for me. What no one else could ever do.

We want to serve God. Who gave his son to set us free. There's a sinner crying out. Secondly then we have a sinner who waits.

There's that wonderful part. Of the psalm verse 5. Where it reads. I wait for the Lord my soul. Waits and in his word I have hope. My soul waits for the Lord.

More than watchman for the morning. More than watchman for the morning. Now in your life.

Have. I'm sure you have. Have you ever been really excited for something. Most of us are a little bit past the age to be excited for Christmas. But can you remember the feeling when you were little. Or it was the day before your birthday.

[17 : 26] Or it was Christmas Eve. Or the day before you were doing something really cool. That you really looked forward to. And you know the day before. It's like all you can think about is tomorrow. Tomorrow.

Tomorrow. And you know you go to bed. And you just can't sleep. Because you're up thinking. Come on tomorrow. Hurry up. Get here soon. And then it's three o'clock in the morning. Before you finally collapse with exhaustion. And then you're up again at six.

Because the day has finally come here. At last. That wonderful day. That wonderful thing we were all hoping for. It's finally here. Well.

Psalms 130 tells us that. There's something worth waiting for. That's far better than Christmas. Or our birthday.

Or New Year. Or you know the next football match. Or whatever it is that you're into. There's something much, much greater. That's worth waiting for.

[18 : 24] But waiting is hard. Isn't it? Especially if it's something you're really looking forward to. And this last year. Last two years really. Has shown. You know.

You make plans. You plan a holiday. Or you plan to go visit a loved one. You're really excited for it. And then you have to cancel. Because we're in lockdown again. Or someone's ill.

Or something has happened. That's kind of. And you're like. Oh. I just have to wait. I just have to keep waiting. And waiting. And waiting. You know. There was a year gap. Between Thomas seeing.

He's one of my parents. His grandparents. All they could see was him on a screen. You know. You really. It was such. When we finally got to go. It was such an amazing day.

Well. There's something even greater than that. To look forward to. And it tells us really. How the psalmist was waiting.

[19 : 19] With a rather interesting phrase. One that we don't really. Maybe understand. In our modern context. Is that phrase. More than watchmen. For the morning. So we're going to have a look at that image. For a little minute.

So. More than watchmen. For the morning. Again. It's not something we instantly recognize. In our 21st century context. Let's go back in time. Let's imagine.

That you were a watchman. Or a watch woman. And you were posted. In a watch tower. Or on the walls of a fortress. Or a castle. At night. And it was your job.

To keep your eyes peeled. On the horizon. In the pitch black of night. Looking out for enemies. Or invaders. Or bandits. Or thieves. Or wild animals.

Or whatever it was. That may come. And put your town. Or your garrison. At risk. And remember. In these days. They didn't have search lights.

[20 : 14] They didn't have torches. Or anything like that. They had maybe little flame torches. Or lanterns. If you were lucky. But that was it. You know. The light from that. Wouldn't go very far.

So you were reliant. On the light of the moon. And the stars. To kind of show. The land around you. And we all know. What it's like. To be cloudy at night. You know. We live in Scotland. Happens all the time. It's pitch black.

You know. Sometimes. When there's no street lights. When there's no houses. We're in the middle of nowhere. And it's just. You cannot see. Like a few feet. In front of you. And that was your job.

Your job was to stand. All through that night. And make sure. Nobody was coming. To do you harm. It was really easy. For an enemy army. If they took off.

All their gear. To be really sneaky. And to sneak past. In the darkness. As long as they were quiet. You know. They could climb the walls. And be upon you. Before you knew it. So if you were on night watch.

[21 : 12] If that was your job. You would have been. So desperate. For the morning to come. You know. I know we all don't like. Being at work sometimes. You're like. Come on. Five o'clock.

I need to get home. But this was almost. A life and death thing. And this was like. Come on son. I need you to be here. So I don't die. If somebody comes. I don't see them. You'd be so desperate.

For that first flicker of light. On the horizon. To come above. And illuminate the landscape. Showing you. That you were safe. That the morning had come. That you'd done your job well.

And you could go home. And relax. Thinking. That's it. We're safe. For another day. It's a beautiful image. Of faithful patience.

Of eagerness. But also confidence. Confidence. Because. There's one thing. We can always be assured of. Is going to happen every day. And that's it.

[22 : 06] The sun. Is going to come up in the morning. The dawn will come. The night may feel like it lasts forever. But we know. There will be a time. When the sun is going to come. And the day will be with us.

But. And something else is really amazing. Is these guys. Who are watching. Who are waiting. Who are eagerly anticipating. The coming of the dawn. They're the ones.

That will be the first. To see it come. They're the ones. That their eyes are open. They're the ones. Who are paying attention. For when it comes. When you see something repeated.

In Hebrew poetry. It's because the author. Is wanting to give emphasis on that. He's wanting to highlight. Its importance. Or highlight. You know. The strength of a feeling. So that's why you've got waiting.

Repeated twice. And that sense of. The watchman. Repeated twice. It's important to the author. Because. It's a hard thing. Having to wait.

[23 : 06] Isaac Watts wrote a poem. Based on this psalm. He called it. Pardoning grace. And this is what he said. He said. I wait. I wait. For thy salvation. Lord. With strong desires.

I wait. My soul. Invited by thy word. Stands watching. At thy gate. Just as the guards. That kept the night. Long for the morning skies.

Watch the first beams. Of breaking light. And meet them. With their eyes. So. My soul. To see thy grace. And more intent. Than they. Who meets the first openings.

Of thy face. And finds. A brighter day. It's one beautiful image. Of what patient waiting. For God to come.

But when really. Was the last time. We had to properly wait. For things. I mean. You know. In the days of the internet. You need. If you need to find out. A fact.

[24 : 05] You know. You don't have to go down to the library. Or break out the encyclopedia. You just. Tip tap on your phone. Oh yeah. That's what that is. And then you're done. Or if you're. You know. Or if you're. If you need something quick.

And you can't get it from the supermarket. Just whip open Amazon Prime. And boom. It's there the next day. You don't have to wait at all. Waiting. And patience. These things are becoming forgotten things.

We don't. We don't. We don't really. Have patience anymore. When you order a pair of shoes. And it takes a week to come. And by the end of that week. You're like.

Come on shoes. I need you. We don't really. But you know what. You know what I mean. Is that we don't feel like we can wait anymore. We've become too comfortable. Well.

God is certainly worth waiting for. He's worth waiting our whole lives. If it needs be. Imagine standing on that wall.

[25 : 03] In that watchtower. But not just for one night. But 50 years. Or 60 years. Or more. That is worth waiting for. For God.

But we don't do it out of fear. We don't do it out of fear. Of what will come in the night. That will assail us. And destroy us. No. Instead we wait. Out of a joyful expectation.

Of what is to come. We wait. For the wonderful things. That God has promised. To come into reality. That there will be no more pain. There will be no more suffering.

No more death. The old order of things. Will be done away with. Be new creation. No more sin. What a wonderful thing that is. To wait for.

We wait. Out of love. Out of joy. So we have a sinner who cries out. A sinner who waits. And thirdly. And finally. We have a sinner. Who hopes.

[26 : 02] The last two verses there. Verses 7 and 8. Read. 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. The psalmist now. Moves on. From his own personal experience.

His own personal testimony. And now moves on. To that of the whole of Israel. The whole of the people of God. This psalm really is.

An inclusive psalm. It doesn't just. Talk about one person. But it talks about the whole. Of the people of God. Having. Having realized. And remembered. And found forgiveness.

For himself. In the infinite mercies of God. The psalmist now wishes. All of God's people. To have the same. He wants all of God's people.

[26 : 59] To trust. In his word. To trust in him. Verse 5. I think is my favorite. In the whole psalm.

I wait for the Lord. My soul waits. And in his word. I hope. We can trust in God's word. We can trust in what he says. Because there is no lie in him. There is no deceit in him.

What he says. Is true. What he promises. Will happen. We can have. Hope in that.

We can trust in God's promises. We can trust in his faithfulness. If there is one thing. God has proven. Throughout human history. It is his faithfulness.

To his people. Who despite their failings. Their idolatry. Their sin. Over and over and over again. God doesn't forget them. He remembers them.

[27 : 55] He remembers that great covenant. He made with them. That great promise. That he made to Abraham.