

# Christ Suffered (Evening Service)

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[ 0 : 01 ] Let's pray. Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening, in Christ's name. Amen. Please, yes, be seated. Hello, everybody. My name's Aaron. I look after the service, and I just want to add my welcome to Nicole. So if you are new or visiting the city, it's fantastic to have you. I hope the service is an encouragement to you. And just something quickly about Canada Day. I just want to acknowledge Canada Day, Canada Day Weekends. My wife and I are both immigrants to this country, and I just wanted to say thanks for having us. I think we're not far off being able to apply for citizenship, and we're really quite delighted to do that. So these have been fantastic years for us. So sincerely, thanks for having us. Anyway, here we go. Look, Psalm 22. So if you are joining us here for the first time, what we're doing is we're, over summers, we do a sort of a short series looking at Psalms that are grouped around a particular topic. And this year, the topic is Psalms that are quite messianic, that have a lot to do with Jesus. Now, of course, they're all Christ Psalms, but some of them seem to apply to Christ more than others. So this week we're looking at Psalm 22, and you're probably really familiar with it because at the most climactic scene in Christ's life, when he's on the cross, he quotes Psalm 22, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Now, back in the days, they didn't have chapters and verses like we have now. So when somebody wanted to refer to a whole Psalm, they'd just quote a really recognizable line from it. And the point was, I'm talking about the whole thing, not just that one line. So on the cross, Jesus is saying, if you want to understand what's happening to me right now, if you want to understand what's happening on the cross, go to Psalm 22. So our goal tonight, we're going to dig deep into this Psalm to help us understand the cross. So it's called a Psalm of David at the top there. It's going to be really, really, really helpful to have your Bibles open because it's quite technical, the Psalm. So it's called a Psalm of David. You can see it sort of at the top there. But what makes this Psalm really enigmatic is what it describes in the Psalm doesn't seem to match anything that ever happened to David. So what does the Psalm describe? We see verse 6 and 8 there.

He's somewhere in public. People are jeering and mocking him. Verse 15, he's dying of thirst. He's laid in the dust of death. 17, we can see his bones. 16, he's being pierced by something.

18 people are gambling over his possessions, which is what people did when somebody was killed. So Psalm 22, the scholars will say it's describing an execution. And also add to that the fact that the writer feels abandoned by God, but then he gets delivered and the whole world praises God as a result, as well as future generations. And one more thing, there's no confession in this Psalm.

David almost always, if it's a sort of a lamenty sort of Psalm like this, he always sort of says, I've done this terrible thing. Forgive me and I've got all these problems as a result. That was last week's passage, wasn't it? There is no, I did bad stuff. I'm in a mess because of my own sin. Forgive me. Get me out of this mess. There's none of that. All of this is happening to an innocent person.

[ 3 : 35 ] So what's really enigmatic about this, what's quite unusual about this, as all the scholars agree, this never happened to David. I was dying alone without God. People were mocking me. I was totally innocent, but I was delivered. And as a result, people from all nations worship God.

So clever folks have scoured the Old Testament. There's nothing in David's life that resembles this situation playing out. So how do we account for that? Well, we go to Acts chapter 2. Let me read a few verses for you from Acts chapter 2. Brothers and sisters, I might say to you with confidence about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried in his tomb is with us to this day, being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne. He foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ, that he would, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did flesh see corruption. So how do we account for Psalm 22?

It's David reflecting on some type of suffering he was going through. But as he's reflecting on this, as he's doing this, the Holy Spirit speaks into the situation. The Holy Spirit grabs ahold of David and gives him insight into a greater king to come who will suffer infinitely more and the result of the suffering and deliverance will be infinitely more glorious. So this is what Luke of Acts says was going on here. And we add to the fact that, you know, the climax of salvation, Jesus quotes it.

How do we interpret the Psalm? How do we look at the Psalm? What's the basic framework? It's this, is that we should interpret the Psalm as primarily describing Christ's experience on the cross. So it's quite an unusual Psalm in that sense, because normally the standard biblical interpretive method is this, is that you first try and work out what the text meant to the original hearers.

And you spend a lot of time on that, and then you go to, okay, what does this mean for the New Testament and how does Jesus, you know, what is Jesus in all of this? But here it's no, we go straight to Jesus. So with those lenses on, let's dig into it. Now it's quite a tricky Psalm, so we have to look at structure. I know structure is quite boring, but it's really essential to understand this.

[ 5 : 58 ] So if you sort of just slide your eyes over the whole thing, the Psalm sort of snaps in two at verse 21. So the first sort of two thirds are lament, which is why we, you know, why we did some very appropriate lament singing this evening. The second part is praise. So we've got lament, and then it breaks at verse 21 and becomes praise. So what we'll do now is we're going to zoom in on just this first sort of two thirds, the lament part. And that breaks into six little movements. One, two, three, four, five, six. Okay.

Okay. Alternating between, this will be confusing, but just stay with me. Okay. Alternating between I statements and you statements, I statements and you statements. This will become clear in a moment.

I'll show you what I mean. So one to two versus one to two. My God, my God, why have you taken me? Why have you so far away from me? Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Verses three to five. You are holy.

Our father's trusted in you. Six to eight. I'm a worm. All people mock me. Nine to 11. Yet you were at, you were with me since my birth. 12 to 18. Bulls encompass me. They surround me, et cetera.

19 to 21. But you. So the structure of the first 21 verses is my problems, my problems, but you. My problems, my problems, but you. My problems, my problems, but you. Okay. That's the basic structure and that's really helpful to know and you'll see why surely. So now let's zoom in even more and let's just focus in on the I stuff, the my sections.

[ 7 : 33 ] And how it describes what the person is going through at that point. Okay. And what it does describe is immense suffering. And the sufferings are threefold. They are spiritual sufferings, they are physical sufferings and they are mental sufferings. So let's look at those three there. So we'll start with the mental sufferings. That's I think verses six to eight. But I'm a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind, despised by people. All who see me mock me. They make my, they make mouths at me. They wag their heads. He trusts in the Lord. Let him deliver him. Let him rescue him for he delights in him.

And mockery and shaming is just an awful, awful thing, but very common. I think the way our hearts are made up, we like to pull down people who make outrageous claims. Claims like, I trust in the Lord.

And in the age of sort of social media, public shaming has become a bit of a fine art, I think. Social media has made it very easy to jump on the shame bandwagon. Wide magazine, which I love this magazine, it's great. They did this article a few years ago on this type of thing. And they said, shaming, it seems, has become a core competency of the internet. And I, as I was sort of studying this passage, I wanted to sort of do some reading and thinking about shame and mockery and what it does to us. And some of you might remember Monica Lewinsky, who had an affair with the then president, Bill Clinton. This is 18 years ago. This is a long time ago. And it's only in the last few years, she's actually sort of spoken up about what it was like to be shamed on such a public platform, on such a public scale. And let me read her just a couple of sentences from a TED talk here. She said, a marketplace has emerged where public humiliation is a commodity and shame is the industry.

How is the money made? Clicks. The more shame, the more clicks. The more clicks, the more advertising dollars. We're in a dangerous cycle. The more we click on this kind of gossip, the more numb we get to the human lives behind it. And the more numb we get, the more we click. All the while, somebody's making money off the back of somebody else's suffering. That's what she said. Now we see that in our passage in verses 17 and 18. So Christ is on the cross. People are mocking him and shaming him.

And what's happening at the foot of the cross? You can't get closer, right? At the foot of the cross, what's happening? Soldiers, numb to the torture that's inflicted, are kind of rolling dice. They try and make a quick buck out of the guy's clothes. All that to say, it was a bit of an excuse here, but all that to say, the mental suffering was immense. David's looking into the future and he said that the suffering that I, turns out to be Christ, will experience will make me feel less than human.

[ 10 : 47 ] I'm a worm. I feel like a worm. This mental anguish is overwhelming his personhood. So Christ's suffering on the cross was mental, immense. It was immense. It was also physical. It's the second one I want to talk about. Physical. That's 12 to 18. Verses 12 to 18. We'll come to that in a moment, but another little excuse here. So I've got this book on my desk that I've sort of thumbed through a bit.

I need to read the whole thing. It's called The Body Keeps the Score. I don't know if any of you have read that book, but it's a series of case studies in trauma and the effects on the mind and the body. And the basic just is that trauma rewires the brain and has this profound effect on the body.

So for children, for example, who've experienced trauma, there's this lingering physical effect later on in life. So a neglected child will subconsciously rewire their mind to tell their body to be on high alert the whole time. The body's on high alert the whole time. And these stressed out little bodies become big, stressed out bodies that are tuned into the sort of fight or flight sort of situation in it. And that's linked to all sorts of diseases and illnesses. Or as a result of trauma, their bodies are numbed out, trying to keep themselves from the, kind of keep these memories at bay and so numbed out, they can't engage in life's pleasures. And it's been fascinating reading, actually. I'd recommend the book to you. So this physical trauma described in Psalm 22 was brought about by mental and spiritual anguish. And as we read about it, it just sounds awful.

Christ is not saying, you know, oh, my hands really hurt, my feet really hurt. I can't breathe very well.

Listen to how he describes what's happening to him. Verse 14, I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax. It's melted within my breast. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, which is like a little shard of a pot.

[ 12 : 55 ] And my tongue sticks to my jaws. You lay me in the dust of death. I've pierced my feet, my hands. I can count all my bones. It's a description of a body that stopped working properly, isn't it?

Wax and water words. It's like there's a formlessness about the body. It's an inward picture of physical anguish. It's like the body's in a state of shock.

You know, it's not a description of somebody that's being ravaged by disease. It's not a description of somebody with a terrible disease. It's a description of a body's response to trauma, to immense trauma. So, there's mental suffering. There's physical suffering.

And there's spiritual suffering. And I'll talk about this one last because it's the most profound one of all. I want you to think about this. What did Jesus shout out on the cross? He didn't say, my hands, my hands, my feet, my feet. He said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

You know, people have died worse deaths than Christ. But no one's ever suffered spiritually more than Christ. So, on the cross, Jesus was separated from the Father. And I want you to think about for a moment what he lost at that point of separation. When someone doesn't want anything to do with you, like, you know, say on Facebook, somebody unfriends you or something, you know, it's like it makes you feel a bit sad. Or somebody at school or work doesn't, you know, all of a sudden stops talking to you. That makes you feel bad. Or like a close relationship, a breakup, a divorce. This is a horrible thing. It's terrible, like terrible things. But Jesus' relationship with his Father was beginningless. And it was more intimate than any human relationship has ever been. And for the first time in eternity, Christ was separated from his Father. As he took the judgment and anger of God on himself, he was separated from the Father.

[ 15 : 06 ] So, whatever was happening to his body, that was a flea bite compared to what was going on in his soul. So, those are the sufferings of Jesus, as described in Psalm 22. And that's the eye sections, mental, spiritual, physical agony. And of those, the spiritual one was the worst. But what's remarkable about the Psalms is as he describes something awful thing that was happening to him, despite this suffering, Christ still declares his trust in his heavenly Father. So, very quickly, let's look at the you sections. As I said, there's these I and you sections, and they alternate. So, the you sections, really, really quickly, if you sort of slide your eyes over, you see they get more intense every time. So, three to five, that you section there, is recalling how God has saved his people in the past, and we should think that he will again. And then in verses nine to 11, it gets more personal, talking about God's faithfulness since birth. And then in the climactic you section, 19 to 21, where the writers, you know, there's a point where it's like, this is it, they're going in for the kill. Save me. But you have rescued me. That's where the passage just snaps right there.

Something has happened. Lament, lament, lament, trust, trust, trust, rescue. Something's happened. At this point, the Psalm pivots, and it turns to praise. And we'll look at that.

But just a little excuse here, just as an aside, it's very interesting to note that. Do you notice how, sort of at the sort of climactic point there, the oppressors in this situation, the people who are persecuting, they're called lions and dogs and oxen. And Jesus, who is the oppressed person, describes himself as a worm. Both oppressor and oppressed are called animals.

It's very interesting, I think, that it sort of describes the dehumanizing effect of being oppressed, as well as the dehumanizing effect on being an oppressor. There's this sort of diluting of the divine image when we treat each other's, when we treat somebody else really badly. The same thing happens when we're treated badly. You can feel diluted. I live with a guy who was a refugee, a Kurdish refugee, a few years ago. And he had terrible PTSD. And as he walked around the neighborhood, I remember having a conversation one day with him, and he was just saying, people don't even look at me. And he kept referring to himself as a dog. He says, I'm just a dog here.

I'm just a dog. All right. That was an aside. Let's move to praise. So we're looking at verse 22 onwards. So the whole psalm turns to praise. Now, if you wanted to break this up, you could say, from the cross, Jesus looks ahead after deliverance. He looks ahead and he looks into the immediate future first. Looks into the immediate future. 22 there. I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation. I will praise you. Christ is alive. He's teaching. He's preaching.

[ 18 : 35 ] People will see him. That's when it's going to happen immediately after deliverance. That's the immediate future. And then he looks way into the future to say, here's what's going to finally happen as a result of the deliverance. 27 and 28. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations. So because of Christ's death and resurrection, you can go anywhere in the world and you're going to find followers of Jesus. So there's the immediate effects.

Christ's resurrection. People will see him, will teach, will preach. There's the way, way, way future effects, 30 to 31. Sorry, there's the immediate. There's the future effects. And then 30 to 31 is what's happening in between. What's happening in between resurrection and Christ's final return.

30 to 31. Posterity shall serve him. It should be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn that he has done it. It's a great line, isn't it? That he has done it. I love these verses. They talk about what's happening between resurrection and return. They talk about a faith that is being passed down through families, that is being passed down through generations. And it talks about that our children will continue to proclaim Christ. And what is it they're going to say about Christ? They're going to say, he has done it. He has done it. Christ has done it. He, Jesus, has done it. He has rescued us. I particularly love this story because I've been having these great conversations with my daughter Sadie recently about faith. And she has no baggage about sharing her faith publicly with people. And I mean, she doesn't even think about sharing. She's just being sort of like a kid who believes in Jesus and is just sort of talking about it, right? Which is a great model for us. She's not trying to manipulate anything or work some angles. It's just part of her life and she just brings it up a lot, you know? So we had a family over for dinner last week and they're not believers. And I said to them just before we ate, I said, listen, we say grace in our family. I just wanted to give you a heads up. You don't have to do anything. You just sit there, you know, we're just going to thank God for the food. And I didn't want them to be embarrassed by this or feel awkward about this. And so I thought, I'll ask one of my kids to say grace.

So I said, okay, who wants to say grace? And Sadie said, I'll say grace. And I thought, okay, this would be great because there's the kid cuteness factor and that'll take the edge off everything, you know?

And I'm thinking that Sadie will say thank you for butterflies and rainbows and the lovely food, you know? So, but no, she does this and she closes her eyes and bows her head and says, this is verbatim what she said. Thank you, Jesus, you died on the cross for our sins. Thank you, you rose again.

[ 21 : 33 ] Thank you, you went to be with your father in heaven and thanks for the food. Amen. Isn't that great? Jesus looks ahead and he sees an immediate thing happening, his resurrection. He looks ahead a bit further and he sees faith being passed through generations. And he looks even further and he sees the whole world bearing down before him. Now let's close this up. Psalm 22, what does it do?

What's it doing here? What's it doing in the Bible? It is giving us an insight into what Christ went through on the cross. And what do we learn? Christ was truly abandoned by his father on the cross.

And he was truly abandoned so that we would never be abandoned by God. Now we can experience the apparent abandonnness of God, right? We can experience that. We can go through difficult things. We can go through dry spells and it can feel like God is completely distant to us. But it's an apparent distance. God is still with us. God is closer than you can know.

And he's closer than you can know. And he can live in your heart because Jesus went through a real abandonment of God for us so that we don't have to. So even though life can be really dark, God is still with us and we can trust in that and we can praise him for that. Folks, this is the God described here that we can trust, isn't it? This is a God we can give our whole lives to. Amen.

Amen.