

My God, My God

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Preacher: Rev. Dr. Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] St. John's Shaughnessy Church The passage which we are to look at this morning is Psalm 22.

You will have heard it read from page 483 in the Old Testament section of your Blue Pew Bible. You will also, with some dexterity, be able to find it in the prayer book. And to add to the confusion slightly, there are two different translations of the Psalms that I have recommended to you. And I am going to work from a third. So, between the three of them, you will have some idea of the extent of what this psalm is all about.

So, it's an absolutely amazing psalm. And it begins with the cry from the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 36] When, at the height of his suffering, he said, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Well, for that reason, this psalm is thought to have been written prophetically to cover the event of the cross of Jesus Christ.

And yet, in fact, it was written hundreds of years before by David as a poem. And what he did was to describe, presumably, the circumstances of his own life.

So, that it's possible that David, in the conflict with Saul, came to the point of despair, where he too said, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And I think I can guarantee to each one of you that in the course of your life, you will come to the point where you too will cry, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[3 : 19] St. Peter, in his first epistle, gives us a fascinating concept of where Psalm 22 came from.

Why it has such direct application to Jesus Christ. So that in the first chapter of Peter's epistle, the tenth verse, he says, Concerning this salvation, then he goes back to the prophets.

Prophets that prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, it was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory.

It sort of treats the whole passion story of our Lord, which we rehearse in the life of the church throughout this week.

That whole passion story is treated by Psalm 22, understood by St. Peter, and to be received by us as that event in history which had to happen.

[4 : 52] Without it, history would be lost. This is the great event. And we want to look at it.

The psalm begins with the words, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Almost the last word that Christ cried from the cross, indicating that this psalm was in some way his consolation and his anchor as he experienced the dreadful reality of the scourging and the crucifixion.

And so, he says, his experience there is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from me and from saving me so far from my words of groaning?

A sense of total dereliction? A sense of being totally abandoned? It's an amazing statement.

[6 : 16] And then, he goes on, and in verse 3, he says, You are enthroned as the Holy One.

You are, you are the one who remains holy. Which is in such contrast to us, when we experience abandonment, when we experience dereliction, when we find ourselves utterly alone and apparently forsaken, we follow Job's prescription, the one that was given to him when his friends told him, curse God and die.

And that's what we do, mostly. And there are, I meet lots and lots of people who under their breath are cursing God for the circumstances in which they find themselves.

But not so. Here, he finds himself in a place of absolute annihilation. And he says, You are enthroned.

You are God. You are in your holy temple. You are rightfully seated on the praises of your people. [7 : 47] God is still God. Well, from there, he goes on to say, Abandoned by God as I seem to be, then I am I am completely humiliated at the hands of men.

Verse 6, if you look at it. I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by people. All who see me mock me. They hurl insults, shaking their head. So that you get this sort of double disaster.

Abandoned, apparently, by God and despised by men. And that's where he finds himself. And that's where Jesus came to when the crowd cried out, Crucify him.

All the circumstances that surround this Palm Sunday are Jesus having been reduced to of no account whatever by his fellow human beings.

[9 : 08] And there's something I want to show you that follows that. And that was sort of the cutting edge of his circumstance. And it's the matter of trust.

And if you look if you look in verse 4, he says, Our fathers trusted and they were not ashamed. They trusted in you, Lord, and they weren't ashamed having done that. And then he goes on and says, and I have that witness that they were not ashamed.

But then he goes on and says in verse 9, that trusting has been part of his life. You brought me out of the womb.

You made me trust even at my mother's breast. And again in verse 10, from birth I was cast upon you from my mother's womb you have been my God.

[10 : 17] I have been brought up to trust you. I have been brought up to put my whole confidence in you. I learned it from the womb, from being at my mother's breast.

I have the witness of the fathers who trusted you. And here I am in the situation where, my God, you have forsaken me.

And is my trust to fail in this moment because of my circumstance? obedience. Well, from there it goes on.

He is taken over by fearful imaginings. In verses 12 and 13, he says, many bulls surround me, strong, arrogant, well-fed bulls encircle me, roaring lions, tearing their prey, open their mouths wide against me.

And you know how, when you are in a position of despair, when you are in a position of fear, your mind takes over and fills itself with horrible imaginings, that what is my situation now is only miniature compared to the fact of what is going to happen ultimately.

[11 : 44] And fear gives way to fear and horrible imaginings and thinking in our minds and we are caught up in that so far from the trust in which we thought we could live in relationship to God.

We are caught up by that fearfulness. Well, then you come to verse 14 and the sort of psychosomatic dimensions of fear and how we are reduced to despair and helplessness because we are so totally overcome.

And he says, you know, yeah, yeah. I'm at the age and stage in my life where to get up and go out and do something is sometimes more than I care to.

And sometimes I'm very affected by things so that all my strength and energy disappears. But this is a compounded situation like that when he says, I am poured out like water, my bones are out of joint, my heart has turned to wax, it has melted away within me, I am completely powerless, forsaken, alone, and powerless is the description.

And it's a description of Jesus as his disciples turn from him, the chief priests and the Pharisees turned on him, and nobody stood with him, forsaken, powerless.

[13 : 38] You go on from there to look at what in fact is always been considered the truth of the crucifixion, totally paralyzed with fear, and that not without reason.

He turned and you see the dogs surround him, the band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.

Remember, this is the particular experience of Jesus Christ, but it is also descriptive of the general experience of humankind, an experience which could in fact belong to you.

I don't know where you are, but such an experience could even belong to you. And what he says is, the dogs have surrounded me, evil men encircled me, my hands and my feet pierced, hung naked on the cross, the frailty of his body, his bones are counted, and the gaping people who have cried,

crucify him, crucify him, find some strange satisfaction, in seeing him who was thought to be so great a leader, strung up on a cross, and they gloat.

Those with a simple mind for profit, divide his garments among them, and cast lots for his clothing. And then from that point comes this cry, but you, O Lord, in this my moment of total desolation, but you, O Lord, be not far off.

[15:47] You, O Lord, are my strength. Come quickly to help me. His enemies were already rejoicing over his death, and his prayer is that the Lord would come quickly to help him.

And indeed, the Lord did come quickly. And in verses 20 and 21, you have a kind of composite picture of death, the inevitability of it.

death comes. And it says, deliver my life from the sword, from the power of the dogs, from the mouth of the lions, from the horns of the wild oxen.

You know, back in Genesis, there is the Garden of Eden, where man and all of nature lived in harmony. One commentator says that here the dogs and the lions and the oxen, and the sword of a fellow man, everything has been turned against and nature is instead of a place where you rejoice in creation, you live in fear and hate, and the death wish of all that surrounds you.

So that this picture is in a sense the final moment, as it were, of death. The victory of the sword, the victory of the dogs, the victory of the lion that lies in ambush, and the terrible strength of the wide horns of the wild oxen bringing death.

[17:43] death. Death. It's there. And then, look at the next verse. How can you come for it?

The next verse, which is verse 22. I will declare your name to my brothers in the congregation. I will praise you.

Somehow, into the despair of isolation and annihilation comes the reality of the Lord in his strength and in his care and concern, and he brings death to death.

That is, death is put to death. All the power of death is taken away. death is left with the need to declare to the brethren the praise of God.

You see, I think that our God wants to establish for us that he is an absolute tyrant and that the focus of his tyranny is that death should be overcome and life should be victorious.

[19:16] That hate and evil should be overcome and that love should be victorious. And so you get the transition from the first 21 verses to the last verses of the psalm when life is indeed established under the tyranny of the God of love and of life.

And so he gathers with the congregation and offers to God praise. Praise that God is who he is.

That as in verse 3, he is enthroned upon the praises of his people and that he is the Holy Lord.

And from there it goes on to say that you have not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one. The Lord has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

God. And as you see from Mark's gospel, the record of the final cry of Christ from the cross.

then in this verse you find that the Lord has heard that cry. That in a place of ultimate despair humanly, God hears our cry and hears us in our affliction.

[20:56] Well, because of this, there is praise in the great assembly and there is a resolution that I will no longer live caught in the vicious jaws of death, but I will live in the obedience of faith and I will fulfill my vows in obedience to the God who has met me in my affliction.

And then the world turns upside down in verse 26. The poor will eat and be satisfied. And even those who seek will come to the place where they have reason to praise God because what they have sought, they have begun to find.

And they have moved to the point of transition to the point where their life, their hearts live forever.

And this is, you look in verse 27, this is that the earth will remember and turn to the Lord and the family of nations will bow down before him.

and that's because they have found reason to pray and the tyrant who is our God is given dominion over all the nations so that in verse 29 the riches of the situation is compounded the rich will feast and worship all who go down to the dust will kneel before him those who cannot keep themselves alive.

You see man in his own strength is caught in the cycle of death to death dust to dust and it goes on and on and brilliant as we may be and our civilization marked by amazing achievements nobody can challenge the cycle of dust to dust but it says here those who cannot keep themselves alive they will kneel to worship before the one who brings life the tyrant who demands life have victory so that verse 30 says posterity will serve him future generations will hear be told the story that the

gospel of Jesus Christ will continue to succeeding generations and people in those generations will come to the place of the obedience of faith and then it concludes with they will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn he has done it isn't it amazing how that connects with the words it is finished from the cross he has done it and what has he done he has proclaimed his righteousness the fact of the righteousness of God has been established among us and this is not the righteousness that arises from human arrogance or human achievement or the heights of human civilization this is a righteousness which belongs only to the kingdom of that king who suffered total humiliation this righteousness is brought into our world by the one who was both well it's like this you see throughout the old testament and for the people of the people who were the inheritors of the promises made to Abraham they looked forward to a messiah who should come and that messiah who should come would be recognized because he was despised and rejected he was afflicted he was he suffered affliction that's who the messiah would be but there was another concept of the messiah and that was that he would be king of kings and lord of lords he would be all of that and

[26 : 17] Jesus in effect said I am both the fulfillment of the one who is afflicted and the reality of the one who is king of kings and so on Palm Sunday he rides into Jerusalem in a purple robe and a crown of thorns he rides in to his sentencing and to his scourging and to his crucifixion the man of sorrows acquainted with grief the afflicted one but he also rides with a crown of thorns and that crown of thorns is changed through the fact that what was once a crown of thorns will become a braided crown crown of the praises of all the nations who acknowledge him to be a king that's what our life's about this digital audio file along with many others is available from the

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John's Shaughnessy we hope that this message has helped you and that you will share it with others you Thank you.