# Psalm 22: for Lent

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Date: 11 March 2018

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[0:00] Well, if on short notice you're asked to do something, it's nice to be in a distinct church season. We always are in a distinct church season, but Lent is a distinctly distinct church season, so it has a lot of stuff, if I may call it stuff, to look at.

So I hope together, for sure together, we can look at some Lent with a focus on Psalm 22. Learners' Exchange obviously always begins, you'll know, with prayer.

Hopefully we begin with prayer and it's not out of mere habit. Learners' Exchange as well is an attempt, as we know, to think about, to reason about, or to reason.

I think it's better to say to reason in, to reason in the gospel. So prayer, at least Christian prayer, on this particular point instructs a lot, I'm sure.

Prayer is, of course, we can talk about this in the discussion time. Prayer is many things, but it's always a recognition, isn't it?

[1:20] Prayer is a recognition of God's presence. And that's why we can safely say, reason is always in God's presence.

Something that is easy to forget. We reason in God's presence. Sin, according to Paul, according to Holy Scripture, is the refusal to give glory to God.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul magnificently outlines this. The refusal to give glory to God is what sin essentially is. It is the refusal to give thanks.

Paul says they refuse to give thanks. I'm about humankind's great sin. The refusal to give thanks. Reason may refuse to give thanks.

Reason may refuse, as John Webster puts it, reason so simply. Reason may refuse to live in gratitude. And then, as Paul then outlines this so simply and powerfully, you'll know if you know Romans, the early going of Romans.

[2:30] Humans become, reason becomes dark and senseless and futile. Reason then turns to idolatry, making first something other than God.

We can never speak about God behind God's back. Someone says very nicely. John Webster, actually.

We can never speak about God behind God's back. That's why you always begin with prayer. In principle, your whole life begins with prayer.

A great rabbi once said, I am prayer. We are to be prayer people. Reason begins with prayer. So, let's pray together, asking our God, specifically God the Holy Spirit this morning, to sanctify our reason.

To lead us to think, perhaps remembering spirit, remember, help us to remember our baptism. When we died with Christ. Where our reason was put to death.

[3:42] And where we were raised with him. Our reason has been raised. We thank you, Holy Spirit, to glorify God always and to live always in gratitude.

We pray this morning that our reason may give glory to God. Always. In all things. Amen. We are, as we say, in Lent, a season in which we are reminded that the Christian life is a form of dying.

Is that a good way to put it? To think of Lent as we emphasize the Christian life as a form of dying. It is more life, the Christian life, than a form of dying.

But during Lent, we are encouraged to pause and to think about, even to practice some dying. If that's what you think of your Lenten discipline this year, if you have one.

It's the practice dying. C.S. Lewis said, this is from memory. Somebody will tell me in the conversation time where Lewis said this. But I think very pungently, Lewis said somewhere, learn to die before you die.

[4:57] That's a Lenten word from the wise Mr. Lewis. The Christian tradition, I just, these just come from memory. The Christian tradition has so much a reference to dying.

One of my favorite is the poet Cooper, William, the strange poet. But one of his greatest lines, surely, is deep in thy depths of mercy, let me die.

The death that every soul desires. That is a profound Lenten word from a Christian poet. This idea, this language is always at or near the center of the faith.

Of course. The son of man must be rejected, he told his disciples. Must go to Jerusalem and die. I, Paul's language is so powerful.

I am crucified with Christ, Paul says. I die with him. I fell at his feet as one dead, says the author of the apocalypse. Buried with him in baptism.

[5:59] You have to be dead before they bury you. Buried with him in baptism. The sacrament, the bread and the wine, we're told by the Lord, it will proclaim his death.

The world needs to hear about the death of Jesus. So when we do the Holy Sacrament, we're proclaiming the Lord's death.

So much about death in the Christian tradition. And again, at Lent, we focus in, we think again about this great topic of our death with Christ.

And as we all know, when the Lord was dying, I speak today from faith to faith. When the Lord was dying, he died with, maybe it's better to say the Lord died inside, if you will, inside an old Jewish poem that he undoubtedly knew very well called Psalm 22.

The Lord died with the words of Psalm 22 on his lips. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? As Psalm 22 begins, is referred to, we're going to do this too much today, both times in Aramaic, in Matthew 27 and Mark 15.

[7:15] And the church remembered the Lord saying something, and it went to his language Aramaic, you know for them it is most important.

In this very language, he said these very words. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? So today, again, we'll just look at the first seven or eight verses, really, of Psalm 22.

There's so much in this psalm to talk about. We'll just glance at the first few verses, really. After verse 21, those of you who remember this psalm, most of you know it probably quite well, the psalm really just becomes a resurrection gladness.

Have you ever heard this psalm sung by a choir, a great choir? It's so lament-like as it starts out. And when it gets to that verse 21, the choir is King's College, Cambridge, I've heard it.

All of a sudden, it rises to great triumph. It's a resurrection psalm as well, Psalm 22. I will proclaim your name to my brethren.

[8:26] Just picture the Lord risen from the dead. Israel, in her covenant fulfillment, now proclaiming to the world that her Messiah has been raised. It's a great thing to hear this psalm sung.

It's a wonderful thing to attend to, Psalm 22. The first five verses, to get right to it, just set, or they state, a dilemma.

I think you can call it that. My God, if you've got it in front of you, don't worry if you don't. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me from the words, from the words of my groaning?

Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer. And by night, I find no rest. And then, yet, this lamenting one, this dying one, yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

In you our fathers trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, they were rescued. In you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

[9:43] What words these are. We're so familiar with them, but it's good to just go slow as you look at them. This contrast is so sharp, so painful, so perplexing.

And it continues through all of the first 21 verses of Psalm 22. You see, the dilemma couldn't be simpler. The God who rescues, that's the God of Israel.

He's a rescuing God. The center of their story, God rescues. They've been slaves in Egypt. God rescued them. The story of salvation, elementally, in the Exodus story.

The God who rescues, now this praying one, our Lord thinking of it on the cross, the God who rescues has forsaken the one who is speaking.

The God who rescues has apparently forsaken. There's the dilemma that the psalm opens with. Again, nothing I'm saying today is new to any of you.

[10:52] Just reviewing what we know. It's more important to be reminded than instructed, a great man said. The question why, I take it, should be taken, if you will, at face value.

This psalmist, his words honored by Jesus as he speaks them on the cross, lives in a world which finally expects divine meaning to manifest itself.

That's presupposed in the Psalter, in the faith of Israel. God is known in Israel because God has manifested himself in Israel.

That's why Israel knows God. Israel doesn't have religious opinions or thinks philosophically about what God might be like. They know God because God has manifested himself to Israel.

They do not worship an anonymous God. Lots of people in the world still in our day worship anonymous gods. They say, I love spirituality or that sort of thing.

[12:02] Paul met such people in Athens as we reminded last week. Ah, there's an unknown God somewhere. But, you know, Paul took that as a great opportunity to talk to them. He said to them in so many words, I know God.

I know his name. He's not anonymous anymore. Israel expects to know God and be with God because God has manifested himself as a faithful God who rescues.

So this psalmist is portraying the dilemma of we know a God who rescues and makes himself present, but now he's not present.

There's the simple obvious dilemma. Isn't it wonderful at verse 3 to hear again that Israel praises the Holy One?

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. There's nothing else in Psalm 23 that you might love.

[13:03] There's much in it to love, all of it to love. But that verse especially, isn't that haunting? Yet you are holy, enthroned on the Holy One.

You are enthroned on the praises of Israel, the Holy One. Isn't that remarkable? Often, I didn't find a count on this, but Israel calls God the Holy One in our midst.

That is amazing. Israel knows God as the Holy One in our midst. That's amazing.

Holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. This is worth pausing here and pondering something. Maybe a bit subtle, and if it's too subtle, we'll forget it.

But I think this is really important. Holiness in the Bible, I've got great authorities you can ask me to quote after.

[14:07] So for time's sake, you've got to just assert. Holiness in the Bible is never merely abstract. It's been said. God is not merely holy someplace else, or philosophically known to be holy, or probably holy.

Never abstract. Some deep waters here, but just briefly, it's worth looking at. Holiness is abstract in some non-gospel philosophies that are out there, and they're very influential.

And I think probably, in a sense, they should be influential, but they say some good things. I'll give you two examples. Famously, the great voice of the Enlightenment itself is Immanuel Kant.

If ever the one, he was the son of Pius's parents, I believe. He had that in his circle. Immanuel Kant famously preached the, oh, the very words are so Prussian, you almost want to march to them.

The categorical imperative. I feel like getting marching with that. Roughly, to put it roughly, a severe, unbending moral goodness is demanded, which must be obeyed.

[15:25] The categorical imperative. You feel like, want to salute? Categorical imperative. Or more attractively, I love this book. I'm sure a number of people in this room have read it.

I read it because I think I read it because C.S. Lewis recommended it, but I may have read it for some other reason. Rudolf Otto wrote a famous book. I bet a lot of people read it. The Idea of the Holy.

Another German sort of Prussian title. The Idea of the Holy. A kind of, I would call it, a kind of sophisticated, spine-tingling portrayal of absolute, terrifying otherness.

The Holy. You know, pagans approach sometimes the Holy and their temples very carefully. Bowing and scraping and the right kind of sacrifices.

And that's out there in culture and it's a very profound idea. These abstract sophistications may contain, I'm sure they do, moments of deep, of truth.

[16:32] That's why they're popular and they've had deep influence in our culture and probably spread out to other cultures as well. But we can say this, I think, and again in the discussion time we can come back to these things and go over them because they're wonderful things to think about.

So, these conceptions of holiness are more or less deny the witness of Holy Scripture about what holiness is. You know, categorical imperative.

Idea of the holy, the spine-tingling, otherness that we're afraid to approach, if we approach it at all. They deny the witness of Holy Scripture. God's holiness, and we see it implicit here in Psalm 22, God's holiness is always a relational holiness.

God's holiness is not abstract. It comes to us in the Gospel. This holiness came to Israel, the Holy One, in our midst.

Not just an abstract something. God takes the initiative to let you know that He's holy. Because He's a relational God. The holiness of the Trinity is what else?

[17:45] Relational. That's why the doctrine of the Trinity is so utterly important. It always reminds you that God relates. He's never abstract, standing back, waiting to see if you're interested.

He takes the initiative and says, Here I am. God is relational. God's holiness is relational. The Holy One in our midst, says Israel.

Sinful, mixed up, strange, sometimes disobedient, sometimes under judgment, sometimes even under a kind of rejection by God, is still the Holy One in our midst.

That's the God of the Bible. Not an abstract otherness. He is always coming relationally to His creature.

Comes to Israel. As we heard this morning in our readings, comes to the nations to reveal Himself. And this God, turning to Israel, to the church, which receives Israel's Messiah, this God remains always relational.

[19:01] Relational as electing, as reconciling, and as perfecting. That's the Trinity again. The Father elects. The Son reconciles.

The Spirit perfects. Here is God coming to us. This holiness indeed, it says a fierce no to all that is unholy.

But it remains faithful in love. To separate holiness and love is to just depart from the Gospel.

The Holy One in our midst always comes to elect, to reconcile, to perfect. Again, never a mere abstract holiness.

Always coming to His creation to save it. The Holy One in our midst. The Holy One desires good and open relationship.

[20:02] And when, therefore, we come back specifically to the psalm here, when relationship is absent, the psalmist almost has to cry out, Oh my God, where are you?

I cry by day and night, but I find no rest. Again, Israel expects God to be faithful in relationship because He has shown Himself to be such a God.

He's not an abstraction that they've figured out on their own. God reveals. He comes as such a God. It's a wonderful thing to think about. God expects Israel to know that He's a faithful God.

He is indeed the Holy One in our midst. He's enthroned, even, on the praises of Israel, says this amazing psalm.

I love that little moment of, if for nothing else, it reminds me of a wonderful word from a purgant. Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer.

[21:07] And by night, but I find no rest. I find no rest. That's an amazing word.

Do you know of John Owen, the great Puritan? Wonderful man. Learned man. He ran Cambridge University for a while under Cromwell. He said famously, and if it's someone else who said this, forgive me, but it's the kind of thing Owen would have said, but I think Owen did say it.

When, when I have no rest, says this great Puritan saint, when I have no rest, I give God no rest.

That's a, there's a man who believes in prayer. This psalmist has no rest. He doesn't say, well, that's the way it is. God may turn out just to be an abstraction in my mind.

There's a God, but that's it. No, no, he expects God to be relational. He's the holy one in their midst. And even though he's under rejection and alienation here of some kind, he expects to have a relationship with God.

[22:15] When, I have no rest, I give God no rest. And this psalmist sort of lives by that. I have no rest and I want to know from my God, why not?

You have promised, you're a promising God, you've promised to be present, the holy one in our midst. That's a great, a great encouragement to prayer, isn't it?

When I have no rest, I give God no rest. Owen's mind was so supremely saturated in scripture that he knows that God expects us to expect relationship.

And when it's absent, it's almost as if that's a way of God of saying, why don't you seek me out now? Because I want relationship with you. He still is in relationship with us, but it's, it's, it's obscured, it's hidden somehow.

God wants, God is a relating God, the holy one in our midst, a gracious holiness that wishes always to relate to us. Verse six and forward, just to move on a bit into some even stronger, strange language in this psalm.

[23:32] Again, verses six and forward, these words are so blunt or start, and there can only be the words of someone who so deeply, feels so deeply alienated from, from life itself in a sense and certainly from God.

But I am, these famous words, but I am a worm and not a man. Again, we want to slow down and really take in these kinds of words.

But I am a worm and not a man. Wow. scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

You see verse six there. He continues, the psalmist, all who see me mock me. They make mouths at me. They wag their heads at me.

He trusts in the Lord, say these mockers. Let him deliver him. If he has some sort of relationship with this God, how come it's not there now? Let him rescue him, for he delights in him.

[24:39] The mocking voice of unbelief. It may have been the mocking voice of the psalmist's own doubt that he speaks out here. At Lent, of course, this place, this place of alienation, I think we can call it the place of curse that the gospel talks about and that Jesus assumed this is what we are to meditate on, isn't it?

Why is life an oppression? Why are we alienated? Why do we have to die? Why deeper?

Why did our Lord assume this place of alienation and curse and death for us? Thinking about our Lord's humility, I think, is good for us.

but I don't know about you, I was thinking about this the other day as I, after Alexandra asked me to think about these things a bit for today, I thought about, well, humility is at the center of Lent, but how to proceed at this theme is not always obvious to me and I'll be, I hope I'm not wrong about this, I think it's a bit hard to know how to proceed frequently in our tradition.

I know, I may be wrong about this, but again, the discussion time you can tell me. Bruce Hindmarsh, speaking of Learners Exchange, he's going to speak here, Alexander, isn't he?

[26:20] Sometime in the future. Yeah. Bruce Hindmarsh, thank you. He will be here at Learners Exchange to talk about his recent book about early evangelicalism, especially English-speaking evangelicalism in the, as he calls it nicely, the North Atlantic world.

You know, roughly, that's the story of 1730s Oxford and the spiritual drama there in the lives of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, famously.

bring that up for this reason. This was new to me as I read Mr. Hindmarsh's wonderful volume. I commend it strongly. There was a man that they all knew of.

They didn't know him personally for sure. There was a man named Henry Scougal. S-C-O-U-G-A-L. Henry Scougal. Interesting fellow.

He died in 1657. So let's see. He's roughly 90 years before the outbreak of evangelicalism at Oxford. Put it that way.

[27:31] A chunk of years before the Wesleys and Whitfields start doing their amazing things. He died in 1657 at the age of apparently 27, Henry Scougal.

At the time, he was a professor of divinity at Aberdeen University. Boy who got off to a quick start in life. His short life. And he wrote, this is why I bring him up, he wrote The Life of God, this name of his little book.

I have it with me. I could show it to you. The Life of God in the Soul of Man. I will mention that. I wasn't going to mention this now, but it's got an introduction by some guy who writes introductions to books.

His name is Packer. Packer. The Life of God, the title, The Life of God in the Soul of Man, about which Mr. Whitfield said this.

Mr. Whitfield, he's one of the, you know, the originators of a tradition that we're all very familiar with in this place. He says, Mr. Whitfield, I never knew what true religion was till God sent me this excellent treatise.

[28:43] This, we could say, this treatise by Mr. Scougal converted Whitfield and the Wesleys loved it. John Charles Wesley lived by this book. Just in passing, Mr. Scougal was shaped by Thomas Akempis, Teresa of Avila and other people.

He was a Protestant to his fingertips, but he was, man, very concerned with what his title says, The Life of God in the Soul of Man.

Yes, this young saint sweetly, very sweetly, calls the Gospels the history of his holy life, history of Jesus' holy life.

And comments here, serious and attentive study of it, the life of Jesus, is the best way to get right measures of humility.

See, I'm going somewhere with this. I love that little, he's a 17th century guy, right measures of humility. Right measures, this gets to the issue of how do we get at humility as Protestants?

[29:53] Is not this a good idea for the Christians? Surely it is. In our tradition, say a tradition of doing the stations of the cross is quite absent or extremely rare.

In some high church circles, I'm told, they still do stations of the cross. We don't. So at Lent, serious and attentive study of the Lord's humility might be in order, I would think, or at least is well advised.

I'm trying to find a way of getting at the story of the virtue of humility, if not at Lent, when? You know, if not this way, Mr. Scougal's way of doing it, how else do you recommend it?

You can tell me in the discussion time. So Mr. Scougal simply says, why don't you take the Gospels and ponder the moments of humility that you find in them and think them through.

In a certain sense, I would call this the Protestant stations of the cross thing. Pondering something as simple, this is one of Mr. Scougal's examples. Just stop and think about, he says, the young Jesus, as only Luke tells us, choosing obedience to Mary and Joseph, growing in stature and wisdom.

[31:12] Never really, yes, the Lord, as a boy, chose the way of humility. He would obey Mary and Joseph. Mr. Scougal says, stop and think about that.

A station on the way to humility, if you will. Taking the lowest place and washing the disciples' feet. Mr. Scougal, strangely enough, in his little treatise, doesn't mention that, but there's another obvious one.

The Lord took the place of a slave and washed his disciples' feet. What a way of humility. It's almost as if the Lord was preparing himself for death on a cross, for being nothing, being made nothing, being made a worm.

being made nothing, taking the lowest place. Or when a crowd wanted to somehow make him a king, he withdrew.

No, you want to make me king? No, thank you. No, don't make me a king, not on your terms. He wouldn't be made a king by a crowd.

[32:24] Or one more example, and this is an example Mr. Scougal puts in front of us, the Lord's refusal to be called good master by an inquirer.

That is a strange moment in the Gospels. Good master, what must I do to be saved? And Jesus famously, why did you call me good? He refused to be called good. Why?

Because Jesus received all goodness as a gift, says Mr. Scougal. Jesus received his goodness as a gift from his father. It wasn't his own.

It was a gift from his father. Why call me good? There's none good but my father God. There are of course many other holy scriptures, stations of the cross that we can visit.

I would call them maybe the stations of his lowliness in the scriptures, the place of his lowliness. I wonder if we can ever take the measure of our Lord's lowliness.

[33:23] I think probably we can't. I think its strangest expression comes when Jesus says I am meek and lowly of heart.

He even witnesses to himself as I am nothing. I am meek and lowly of heart. The implication is as I see it, I say this to myself as a reader of the gospels, is that he is saying to me, you are not and that's your problem.

I am meek and lowly of heart, but I am not and that's the trouble. That's I need to be saved into meekness, saved into lowliness.

I need to be saved back into being a creature filled with gratitude and thanksgiving. My reason needs to be put to death and healed so I'm filled with gratitude and reason.

There it is. I'm just as a Protestant speaking today, I want to find a way at Lent to think my way into by God's grace into the mystery of our Lord's lowliness and his humility.

[34:34] The holy one in our midst was meek and lowly of heart. Amazing thought. I hold my breath as I continue here.

There is an American novelist, I won't mention the novelist's name. I didn't have to mention her at all. We needed something a bit light at this moment.

But she loves to write about that great Christian thinker, Jean Calvin, who is often accused by his critics, usually she says by people who don't know a thing about Calvin, that he was simply a hater of humanity, that he often used very strong language about humanity's corruption, about humanity's vileness.

And this language has given offense, I think sometimes even in the church. Calvin must be a hater of humanity. He talks about humanity's vileness, its ugliness, its pollution, everything that's bad with humanity.

It should not, this language, give the Christian offense at least, as we're instructed more and more in the gospel. It should not. And the deepest reason why we shouldn't take exception to this language is very instructive and it's obviously quite in front of us today already, isn't it?

[35:55] The entire Christian life, it seems to me, the whole Christian understanding of reality, I would think, may be summarized as, and here again, I'm trying to get at, in my tradition, a way of thinking through the Christian life that incorporates the emphasis on death, Lenten, Lenten sadness, the good way of dying with our Lord.

We could summarize it as, for meditation purposes, an outline that helps us with these things in terms of, and it's in front of us this morning, is it not a good idea, maybe you already do this and I'm just catching up with you, see all of life in terms of three days.

I think we can do this. In every life at all times, always they overlap, but in some measure, our lives always are participation in Good Friday, are they not?

Do you have any sadness in your life today? Anybody who doesn't, please put your hand up and tell us the secret. Do you pay attention to Oprah Winfrey?

She's always happy. I think. Every life participates in Good Friday, the sadnesses of life, little and sometimes catastrophically horrible.

[37:24] And it is always, it seems to me, Holy Saturday, and always, usually by way of expectation, but sometimes we have a participation in it as well, it is always Easter Sunday, I think.

life is always Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday. Again, on Good Friday, we participate by faith in the deepest pain, even if we're not in it right away.

The deepest rejection, the deepest exile. if I am a worm, and no longer apparently even human, seems just not right, maybe that language which a Calvin would pick up on from this psalm to describe humanity, if that seems to be going too far, well, how about Paul's I am crucified with Christ.

This is just woven into our tradition, in scripture, we can't get away from it. We are to identify ourselves, in some sense, as crucified ones, utterly rejected, set aside by the world.

I am a worm and no man, because my Lord said that on a cross. I can say that without fear. So that's where a Calvin, living in the Christian tradition, as Marilyn Robinson points out to it, she considers his lazy critics, you don't understand how a Christian in the 16th century, like Calvin, would have thought.

[38:57] He thinks everybody's this way because everybody's another way, crucified with Christ, risen with him in glory. If they don't see that Christian outline, they just zero in on Calvin and say, oh, he hated humanity.

No. She says frequently to people, why don't you grow up, read a bit more, get acquainted with the sources that you're talking about without reading them.

She challenges our culture's historical laziness all the time. Our Christian past is disappearing out of just neglect. That language is strong, but it shouldn't be a language that we're afraid of and that we should embrace within the gospel.

The entire Christian life, the whole Christian understanding of reality may be understood as incorporating Good Friday with this strong, strong language.

I am crucified with Christ. I am a worm and no man. Yes. Holy Saturday, moving right along here, is a neglected day.

[40:10] I haven't made much of it in my Christian life. A few years ago, praying with Harry Robinson often at Easter and doing Compline, there are sometimes references to Holy Saturday.

It suddenly comes into the tradition a bit. It's the day when you wait. Holy Saturday. Again, it's neglected. It's a day like most of our days, I think.

It is the day of waiting, the day of hoping, a day of patience, a day of believing promises. You can say a lot about Holy Saturday, but I'll move right along.

I wonder if Holy Saturday, at its very best, is like walking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke's Gospel, pondering Scripture with him, but not as yet seeing him.

We are with Jesus always, but we can't see him. So we're in a sense psychologically, emotionally, along life's way, waiting for his Easter arrival.

[41:14] Now we know that Easter has come and we believe in the resurrected one, but along life's way, a lot of days are like Holy Saturday. We're waiting for his promises to be fulfilled. We're waiting for him to arrive more deeply, hoping, if you will, but still a bit perplexed on occasion.

Surely that's what Holy Saturday is. And moving right along, of course, Easter Sunday. Along life's way, hopefully, we do have some glad, even very glad and happy and fulfilling days.

I hope your life has included some of those days when things have just been good for you. The Lord does give his people good days. If you go back through your life, it would be rare to find someone who said, no, I've never had a good day.

Surely there's been blessings, surprising blessings, and they may be likened to a sort of participation in resurrection. Some people have more of these days in our world and some definitely have less.

And yet, scripture points, doesn't it, to a day of eternal, perfect blessedness for each and for the Lord's bride, his church.

[42:25] his church. We shall, in the future, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. There is sort of an Easter eschaton promise.

Yes, Easter has arrived, the apostles witnessed it, and we live by their witness, and we wait for the perfection of Easter when he returns. So again, this language, sometimes a strong language of humility is good, or it seems so.

I am a worm and no man. Well, that is a strong language, but when we relate it to life in Christ on a good Friday, we can see why the tradition gives us this language to use.

I'm a worm. In sin did my mother conceive me. That kind of language is in the tradition. We can't hide from it. We can't apologize for it when the world uses it to attack our faith.

Thank goodness there are, say, the odd American novelist who puts them in their place. Holy Saturday, again, longing, waiting, lamenting, expecting. Lord, how long?

[43:34] We still pray that prayer, even though we know we believe in a resurrected Lord, we still pray the Psalter. Lord, how long? How long until this particular burden that I'm bearing goes?

How long do I wait for this blessing that I yearn for? Lord, how long? And again, Easter. Here is a wonderful word. Mr. Schoogle approves a strong and positive language about the self when it's appropriate.

Yes, there's, I'm a worm and no man, I sinned, my mother can see me. We have to embrace that language and use it. It's a good Friday language. Mr. Schoogle, again, again, he, he, this is the moment in his little book which sort of almost leapt out at me as very, wow, why haven't I heard this kind of thing before?

In a context, in fact, of disdaining sins, but applicable to our future selves in Christ, surely, he says this, I love this quote, reading this book, it's a little book, it's easy to read, but for nothing else, I'm glad I read this book.

He says this, a quote, did we but mind who we are, and for what we were made, this would teach us, in a right sense, to reverence and stand in awe of ourselves.

[45:07] Do you ever reverence and stand in awe of yourself? Mr. Schoogle says you should on occasion. What? But I'm a worm and no man.

In sin did my mother conceive me? Mr. Schoogle says, yes, of course, that's true. You are crucified with Christ. But let me say those words again. Did we but mind, says this young saint who had such an impact on the evangelical tradition at its source.

Did we but mind who we are and for what we were made? This would teach us in a right sense to reverence and stand in awe of ourselves.

Created in God's image, I'm trying to unpack why he would say that. I think it's self-evidently true. The more you created in God's image, yes, you are created in God's image.

You can't get away from that. No matter how bad you are, you're created in God's image. You have been crucified with Christ. You are waiting in holy patience on many a holy Saturday for what?

[46:20] To be raised with him in glory. In the light of that, we can stand in awe of ourselves. This is the only place where I've come across this famously.

It's in Lewis, isn't it? In his famous sermon. Everyone you meet, if you could see them as they're going to be in glory, you'd be tempted to worship them, Lewis asks. Someday people might be tempted to worship you.

You'll be so beautiful in Christ. So we stand and we reverence ourselves when we see who Christ has called us to be. This language obviously balance, if that's a kind of too easy way to put it, the Good Friday language, yes, the Holy Saturday language, and the Easter Sunday language, when it's in place, it's full and rich, and instructs us in the whole gospel.

I must, time for conversation. Psalm 22 is at the heart, it's near the heart of the churches and the Christians remembering of the Lord during Lent, obviously, isn't it?

At verse 22, as we mentioned earlier and forward, the great triumph of Christ begins, but that is for the Easter season. And we only let guys like Jim Wagner unfold the important parts of the second part of every psalm.

[47:36] So, Jim, thank you in advance. So, I post script. At the beginning, at the very beginning, we thought about reason and prayer. In the Christian everything, in our way of knowing, in our way of hoping, in our way of remembering, in everything, we are to pray that our reason, and today we've done a bit of reasoning about a psalm in the Christian tradition and the way it talks about Lent, we must always pray that our reason will be sanctified, that our reason will become nothing less than holy reason.

God wants to make us holy, wants to make our reason holy. John Webster talks like that frequently. Our reason is to be holy reason.

Otherwise, it's on its way to becoming something demonic and not reason. There's the great war, properly understood, and it's a deep and complicated topic, I know.

It's one of my obsessions. But there's the war between the Enlightenment, for instance, and the Christian faith. Enlightenment would know nothing about reason subjected to Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.

but our reason is to be made holy. Reason is to be made holy. Since I've mentioned him a few times, let me, as I draw to a close, quote John Webster on this most important subject of reason.

[49:13] Reason, he says, is caught up in the history of holiness. Reason is part of the history of wickedness.

Reason is part of the history of wickedness. And the overcoming of wickedness by the reconciling and sanctifying works of God.

That is the God we know, the Holy One in our midst, relating to us to make us holy. His holiness is relational to make us holy.

Lent is about all of these things and serious prayerful reason. Reason being healed by these mysteries is what we have hopefully been about this morning.

I hope so. Our reason coming to be healed by the gospel mystery. We cannot do these gospel things by ourselves.

[50:16] It goes without saying in the gospel. This is done in us, for us, by the Spirit. The Spirit of the Son, who emptied himself, Paul says in Philippians, made himself perfectly nothing, perfectly lowly and humble, so that Christ might be formed in us by the Spirit, the mystery of our Lord formed in us.

So there's a Lenten look at Psalm 22. Trying to get at it as almost as a with a method that I might we might try and work with as Good Friday thinking, Holy Saturday thinking, and then Easter Sunday thinking.

Making sense out of the strong language in the tradition, showing its gospel logic, so we don't have to be ashamed of any part of it. I'm a worm and no man.

Oh, but I've heard the gospel and I'm waiting on Holy Saturday for myself to be perfected in holiness, made complete in Christ, and in the anticipation of that I can reverence and honor myself.

God doesn't want me to spend life on a cross, crying out to him. He wants to have fellowship with me, the Holy One in our midst.

[51:48] That will be our story for eternity. Just about nine o'clock and I hope we have 15 or so minutes for conversation, so let's end this attempt at holy reason but with a prayer.

Our God, we thank you for the gospel. We thank you for these moments in this world of Holy Scripture that has so much to teach us. Forgive us for our inadequacy as we look at it, but lead us patiently along the way so that we may enter into these things as we should.

And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.