

# The Psalms

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Date: 28 February 2016

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- [ 0 : 01 ]     Yeah, this is the second time that I've been here speaking about the Psalms, and I'd certainly come back again. You know, there are 150 of them, and I don't think that there are 150 chapters in any other book in the Bible, at least the last time I checked.
- So there are a lot of, there's lots of material here, isn't there? And so I thought that I would come back to it, and some of it was at my failure to come up with a title on a topic in time for Alexandra.
- So she chose this, and I think it was good that she did. I'm happy about that. So I want to today not necessarily pick up where I left off the last time, but the last time I spoke to you, it was about Psalm 1 and 2, and I looked at those as something I'm kind of doorposts into, actually, the Psalms.
- And I also described it in some ways as, you know, those three virtues of faith, hope, and love, where love is like a river that runs through the two banks of faith and hope.
- But having shared that about Psalm 1 and 2, which is about really kind of this personal life of prayer, what it means to live the blessed life, and then this public life of the king, in many respects, we kind of pick up where we left off the last time.
- [ 1 : 27 ]     And I realize that some of you actually weren't here for that. But I want to look at three Psalms today. And interestingly enough, of these three Psalms, I'm sure that you've actually heard two of them preached on here at St. John's in the last two years.
- And the first one is Psalm 22, and the other one is Psalm 23. Psalm 23 would have been preached on at the family service during the summer, so maybe you didn't hear that. I'm sure you probably heard it preached on.
- It's obviously the most famous Psalm in the Psalter. But I wanted to actually look at Psalm 22, 23, and 24. They provide, I think, something of a, not a trinity of Psalms, but kind of a trilogy of Psalms.
- In many respects, you know, they're not described as going together in the Psalter, because they're not grouped as such. There's nothing that would specifically indicate that. But, you know, as I read through the Psalter, you know, kind of again and again, it just seemed that these three were really complementary, and I think instructive of one another, you know, in our life of discipleship in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- And there's an easy way to remember these three together, if you just think of them in this term, in terms of how they express who God is. Now, he's revealed himself to us and through these Psalms.
- [ 2 : 50 ]     And in Psalm 22, you can see it as the Psalm of the Savior. And the second one, you know, it's the Psalm of the, excuse me, 24, sorry, 23, the Psalm of the Shepherd, right?
- And Psalm 24, you probably don't know as well. Those first two, you probably do, 22 and 23, but not 24 as much. But if you're going to play with the letter S in alliteration, it would be the Psalm of the Sovereign, of the King.
- And I think it's really important that many of us actually like the idea of, you know, the Lord is our Shepherd. You know, for instance, if I, you know, if I get them in, I do go into a hospital and visit someone.

I actually used to ask people, and sometimes I do occasionally now, but not as often as I used to, you know, can I read you some scripture? And if so, what would you like me to read for you?

And often people will say Psalm 23. You know, or if I ask them the question, you know, when I'm caring for them, what kind of attribute of God or image of God, as it were, that comes to your mind that makes the most difference to you right now in your condition, you know, people will often say, the Lord is my Shepherd.

[ 4 : 06 ] You know, I see Him as my Shepherd, the one who's bringing comfort to me. And so I think it's really easy to gravitate right towards that identity of our Lord, Him as being our Shepherd.

But I want to kind of suggest that might be just a little bit too quick. I want Him to be known to us as our Shepherd, but He also needs to be known to us. We need to know that He's our Savior.

And we also need to be aware that He's our Sovereign. He's our King as well. So that's a little bit why I want to hold these three actually together. Jesus is our Savior.

He's our Shepherd, we know, but also our Lord, our Sovereign, our King. And so I'll make some preliminary comments about all three of these Psalms. We have a handout, we also have the Bible, and then I'll just do some exposition of the Psalm as well.

Maybe we'll get through to the end, because Psalm 22 is long. It's not the longest, but it's 31 verses. And Psalm 23 seems like it's longer than it is.

[ 5 : 13 ] Now, without looking at your Bibles, just think for a minute how many verses Psalm 23 has. I was going to have to share that out loud, and I'll tell you, it only actually has six verses to it.

It's quite incredible. And then we'll get to Psalm 24, which is kind of half-winged as we need to. So let's do that. And so here we have, starting with Psalm 22, just some preliminary comments, and you can follow along on your outline if you want.

And I want to raise a question to start with, which is, what are the Psalms? And I know that that seems like an obvious question. It's like asking the obvious. Sometimes one states the obvious, but one needs to do that.

And the Psalms are prayers, aren't they? But are they more than that? Do the Psalms function in other ways? Do they teach theology?

And I think that we would say, yes, they do, don't they? The Psalms, they are telling us, revealing to us who God is through this prayer that's prayed by the psalmist.

[ 6 : 17 ] Do these Psalms suggest something for liturgy in terms of our life of worship? And maybe they don't lay out patterns for us. They're not prescribing that necessarily.

But sometimes, and we know that these Psalms are actually used in the context of our worship and liturgy, aren't they? Remember once I used Psalm 95, which, for those familiar with morning prayer, it's called the Vinayti, and is prescribed to be said every time you say morning prayer.

And it actually has a pattern in it that really lays out a great order for worship. But the Psalms aren't actually prescribing that, even though they can be prayed like that.

So I just kind of start with that question. And the answer that we know is that the Psalms are these prayers. And they are prayers that are to be prayed. And our tradition, I think, does really well in the use of these Psalms.

We know that these Psalms are in our own prayer book. And the Psalms in our prayer book are actually in the same place that they are in the Bible. They're right in the middle. And they're really easy just to crack the thing open.

- [ 7 : 28 ] And there you find the Psalms. You're right in the life of the Psalms. And it's great if you know your prayer book from beginning to end, start to finish, and where it goes. And it actually takes you over the life of a Christian discipleship in terms of personal and corporate worship and then other aspects of our life from baptism all the way to death.
- And additional creeds and then 39 articles as we come to the end of that as well. But our tradition does really well with the Psalms right in the center as opposed to some other books that will place it actually at the end.
- And you can say, well, it's easy to find at the end as well. But sometimes putting it at the end means, well, we can just maybe just leave it there. But there are a number of ways in which the Psalms are prescribed to be used in our tradition too.
- And they can be used on a daily use, right? We also know that the Psalms are always read for communion. And then anytime we have morning or evening prayer, they're used as well.
- So they're always actually used, prescribed for any time that we have corporate congregational public worship. And that leads me to the next point in your outline, which has to do with the public use of Psalms or congregational use in terms of teaching us, instructing us, leading us in our life of prayer.
- [ 8 : 53 ] Right? I think that prayer is, it's learned congregationally. These prayers in the Psalms are revealed to us in scripture.
- And so we do learn by reading them on our own. But it strikes me that it takes us to another dimension, even greater depth, as it were, and destination.
- When we pray these prayers publicly with one another, as Alexander was saying, in terms of being with someone, you might be there that day of worship because of the person actually next to you.
- And just praying those prayers out loud, I think that brings that point to bear on our life. And so we pray these prayers. We learn these prayers. We learn actually how to pray when we do so congregationally and with others.
- And so these are community prayers. But it's not just any kind of community, is it? I mean, think for yourself just a minute, all the maybe communities or sub-communities that you're in and the purposes they have, the impact that they might have, and even the intent on your life.
- [ 10 : 03 ] But this community is like no other community, is it? It is a covenantal community. So these Psalms are covenantal prayers. They're the prayers of God's covenant people.
- And what does that mean? I mean, that's not a word that we use very much in our kind of everyday life, is it? This idea of covenant. In fact, I can only think of one time over the last 20 years outside of the church that I've heard that word covenant used.
- It was when I moved to Ladner and I wanted to remove a tree. And can you believe it? There was a covenant on my tree. It was really peculiar.
- I just was shocked. And I had to get a document signed that said that I could remove that tree from my property. Well, anyway, on all jokes aside, seriousness, I mean, we are a covenant people that takes it, you know, this life of prayer in the Psalms to a different level.
- And we know the covenant that was struck with Noah and then Abraham and then Moses. And there's a Davidic covenant. Well, they all have their promises to them, don't they?
- [ 11 : 17 ] And they have the signs that go with them as well. So I use this idea of covenant in my first teaching with our candidates who are being baptized. We're having two that are being baptized today.

And I start right there at that point of what of the fact that we actually belong to God. God makes his promises to us. And by virtue, I respond to him in obedience and him calling and commanding us to be baptized.

And we belong to to the Lord through that. He's because he struck this covenant with us. So it's not us striking this covenant with him and us initiating that. He's the one who initiates the covenant with us, makes the promise to us.

And then we respond to him in that. And so these are prayers of this covenant people. It's really important to bear that in mind when we think about these prayers. But there's something called a superscript in Psalms.

And it's a line that isn't given a verse at the top of the prayers, not all of them, but many of them that give us some kind of indication of this of the Psalm, who it's for the occasion that it was intended and sometimes who wrote it.

[ 12 : 25 ] And that's certainly the case for our first one, Psalm 22. Right. If you look at it, you'll see that it says to the choir master, according to the dough of the dawn, a Psalm of David. So we know who's written it. That's the last phrase.

And the first one is to the choir master, isn't it? And so just kind of a word about this choir master. This word for choir master would have been the same word that actually used for someone who was constructing a building.

So this choir master and this person who constructs the building actually what it's saying is the director or the overseer of the, in this case, the reading of the Psalms in congregational life, but in the other case, overseeing the building of some kind of structure, a director.

This is the person who's directing, as it were, the congregation as they're gathered to pray this Psalm and to, to be praying to together. And that just lends itself to saying, look, these Psalms are for congregational prayer and worship.

So not only, not only personal, but, but for public, but of course they are for personal, aren't they? It's not to say that prayer isn't personal. It is deeply personal. And these prayers are very expressive of, of the, the Psalmist's prayer to the Lord and how the Lord has revealed himself to him and the pleas and the petitions and the aspirations of that, that prayer personally as well.

[ 13 : 49 ] And so it throws us actually into the story of that prayer's life in many respects. They're not kind of storyless prayers, storyless kind of poetry.

You know, sometimes poets can write poems that have nothing to kind of do with any kind of particular situation that they've, they've experienced. And, and many of these prayers, we don't actually know what the background or the context of them, but some of them, some of them we do.

And this one in particular, we don't Psalm 22, but it actually takes us to another place. I think when we read it, this Psalm, probably above all the Psalms in the Psalter is the one that, that points most explicitly to the death of our, our savior, to the cross of Jesus Christ.

All of the Psalms point to Jesus. I think it's important that we know that they always express who God is to us and point us to, to Jesus. Even when you read Psalm, Psalm one, where it says, blessed is the man who, and then it goes through the ways in which we can anticipate that a person would be blessed, right?

We automatically, I think, or I don't know about you, but I automatically thought, oh, this is talking about me. If I want to live the blessed life, this is what it really is going to look like. So this is what I'm going to do.

[ 15 : 08 ] But really that description can ultimately be only described as, as Jesus Christ is the one who fulfills that because I don't always do that, but he is the one who always did and, uh, and does.

So, um, so these, these prayers are, they're intensely personal. And we sometimes say when we're reading them, don't we, that I've felt that, right?

When we read through that Psalm or, or I've thought that we may not always say, I hope, I don't think we can always say, yeah, I've experienced that. And that, cause there's some descriptions, even in Psalm 22 today that we could say, yeah, I've, I've never experienced specifically that.

Um, but they're, they're, they're expressive of the Psalmist's, uh, relationship of the Lord and what they're experiencing, uh, in, in, in this case, and then giving, giving a voice to that in terms of prayer.

I think it's also important to point out in a sense of them being intensely personal as well, you know, because often it is actually in the first person, the I, sometimes it's corporate we, and sometimes, uh, the word you, the second person personal or plural might be used.

[ 16 : 21 ] But, uh, but what I love about the Psalms is, uh, they are, I do, I think there's a shocking element to that. They kind of arrest us as we read through them together and, and, and on our own.

And, uh, one of the things that, you know, theologians like to do is categorize these Psalms, you know? So one of the categories is not shocking, but you know, there are, there are Royal Psalms, there are praise Psalms, there are Thanksgiving Psalms, uh, and they're, they're sometimes organized in those and other terms.

Uh, and that's, and that's helpful because you want to learn how to pray by praying these Psalms and know where to go to find them and, uh, and to understand them, integrate them in your life.

But they don't always fit that neatly and easily into, uh, into a category. So, especially when you look at that, look at the detail of them. And I just want to say this before now, we actually look at Psalm 22.

And that is, I know in our culture, we've heard that the devil is in the detail. And, uh, most of us have probably even said or thought that at one point in time, but it's really important to know that the Lord is the one who's actually in the detail.

[ 17 : 35 ] And, uh, the devil is the one who likes to generalize and condemn. And, uh, it's not the Lord who comes to condemn, but to save. And he's into the details of our life. And, uh, and we can take comfort, I think, in that.

So, uh, let's look at the details of Psalm 22 and, uh, again, to the choir master, according to the dough of the dawn, that's really puzzling.

It's a tune, right? And it just really has a kind of a, a nice kind of comforting, almost kind of a soft feeling to it, doesn't it?

And, uh, and then you read the song. It's not like that at all. And, uh, but we don't know the tune, do we? We just know what the, probably the name of it was and that it was in fact written by David.

So let's just, let's just look at this. Um, I'll try to, to spend enough time with it, but also get through it so that we can get to the others as well. So, uh, I think I'll, I'll read it out loud first and then we'll, then we'll go through it piece by piece.

[ 18 : 40 ] It's long Psalm, uh, 20 to 31 versus my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning?

Oh my God, I cry day by day, but you do not answer. And by night, but I find no rest. Yet you are holy and thrown on the praises of Israel and you, our fathers trusted, they trusted and you delivered them to you.

They cried and were rescued in you. They trusted and were not put to shame, but I am a worm and not a man scorned by mankind, despised by the people.

All who see me, mock me. 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.

Yet you are he who took me from the womb. You made me trust you at my mother's breast. On you was I cast from my birth and from my mother's womb.

[ 19 : 42 ] You have been my God. Be not far from me. Many bulls encompassed me. Strong bulls of Bashan surrounded me. They opened wide their mouths at me like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax. It is melted within my breast. My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue sticks to my jaws.

You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me. A company of evil doers encircle me. They have pierced my hands and feet.

I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them. And for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far off.

O you, my help, come quickly to my aid. Deliver my soul from the sword. My precious life from the power of the dog. Save me from the mouth of a lion.

[ 20 : 41 ] You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen. I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation.

I will praise you and you who fear the Lord praise him. All you offspring of Jacob glorify him and stand in awe of him. All you offspring of Israel. For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.

And he has not hidden his face from him. But has heard when he cried to him. And from you comes my praise in the great congregation. My vows I will perform before those who fear him.

The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord.

All the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord. And he rules over the nations. And all the prosperous of the earth eat and worship.

[ 21 : 45 ] Before him shall bow all who go down to the dust. Even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him. It shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation.

They shall come and proclaim his righteousness. To a peoples yet unborn. That he has done it. This is the word of the Lord.

Well, this is a great, great psalm. And I'm happy that I haven't put four psalms together.

Though we read Psalm 25 this morning, didn't we? At the 730 service. And they'll have read it at the other ones as well. So it's kind of great that we have these three psalms starting with this one.

And right from the beginning, you know, we see that this is about God's saving grace. Isn't it? Right there in the first verse. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me?

[ 22 : 44 ] This is about being saved. And we're immediately impacted, aren't we? By David, this prayer of the psalmist. And just this desperation of his.

As he says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He kind of raises this question. I don't know why it is. But, you know, but in the church, we think that the people who don't ask why are the ones who are the most mature.

Oh, he would never ask why. Right. And I read this and I and sometimes I do. I do say to people when I visit them, because I do hear that and I try to be gentle about this.

I think I can at this stage of my life. I realize that that I can use my what perceives to be gentleness with people when it comes to things like this. And just kind of point out, you know, they know that David asked why and our Lord from the cross asked the question, the question why.

And and so David is in desperation here. He is just longing to be saved. But but, you know, the great thing about this, isn't it right? Right.

[ 23 : 57 ] That he's addressing he's addressing God and not in generic terms necessarily. Some other person's God that he's coming to. But he's acknowledging that you are my God.

Who else am I to go to under these circumstances? But but you maybe someone else has something to say, say to me. But there is no one else who can save me.

No one else who can give a response to my my answer here. But you and so he addresses this to his God. It's it's directly to him. And and the desperation is is is bad.

I mean, some of us know this. And this is just general without getting into the details yet of the rest of the song. But but right. Like he is he is utterly groaning. Right. Which kind of takes us to Romans when Paul talks about, I think, the spirit who groans within us.

Well, here here David is. He's he's groaning. He's crying. He longs for an answer which he's not actually hearing. And he's doing this how often?

[ 25 : 01 ] Well, presumably by day and by night. Well, not presumably. That's what it says. By day, he's doing it and by night. And he's finding no rest whatsoever. So in desperation, though, he's headed in the right direction.

Right. He's in in the presence. He's he's or or at least he's he's offering this this psalm, this this question to God. So that's his desperation.

And those are the words that are that are spoken by our Lord from the cross as well. So immediately this points us right to to Jesus right from the beginning. And then he makes this declaration, which is interesting.

I don't know about you when you're feeling like you're in desperation and you address the Lord and you ask the question why or you have another petition that you make. But but look at what he does almost immediately.

This is a psalm. And I realize that this could have been this, you know, the psalmist prayer was coming over a period of time. And here we have it all synthesized in the 31 verses that we have before us.

[ 26 : 02 ] But the next thing he does is he makes this declaration. Right. He says this about the Lord, acknowledging God's attributes almost by way of and remember, this is covenantal people.

He's committed. He's in covenant with the Lord. And so he says, yet you are holy. Love the word yet. Enthroned on the praises of Israel. And and this is a declaration of the man who longs to hear from the Lord.

And I just think that it's so instructive, one, for for who the Lord is. And we make prayers of declaration as a covenantal people.

But also it's it's, I think, directive, you know, when we feel like we're not getting what we deserve or what we what we do or or what or what we what we like.

And it's it's it's it's powerful, isn't it? Just look at the image that David gives here of the praise of Israel to their Lord. See what it says, says that the Lord is holy and he's enthroned like there's this throne.

[ 27 : 08 ] Right. And, you know, I think of a throne and I think of a king with a crown on. Right. I also think of, you know, a throne being kind of a, you know, a chair, as it were.

But I just I think this is incredibly actually affirming of the person who longs to hear from the Lord. Yet he's recognizing that the Lord is actually enthroned on the praises of his people.

Think about that when you praise the Lord. And also we need to think about the one who is on the throne, but never minimize the praise that we offer to our Lord. He is enthroned on the praises of his people, as it's described here.

And then three times David mentions the word trust. And so he has this desire to trust the Lord under the circumstances because God has shown himself, revealed himself trustworthy in the past.

And that's what this is. This is a declaration based on based on the past here. So the fathers trusted, they trusted and God delivered them. And then finally, they trusted and they were not actually put to shame.

[ 28 : 15 ] See kind of what's at stake here for David in this respect. So let's move on from there then. So from declaration, then it actually goes to what I call dereliction or desolation in these next three verses.

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me. And I don't know, at first it kind of looks like he's taken two steps forward and now he's taking one step back.

I don't think that that's really what's happening though, right? This is just an honest assessment and observation of the circumstances that he's facing. Also pointing to our Lord and the ones that he did as well because we know that he was mocked.

People were obviously circling around him as it were when he was on the cross that Good Friday.

So you can almost kind of think along with verse 1 and even in verse 8 that it looks like David's something of a script writer for our Lord.

[ 29 : 19 ] But of course he's not. And Jesus knew these psalms through and through. And in his last day of life and those hours of death, what was he going to use from the cross in his last words?

And what was going to reveal actually to the world that yes, Jesus was fulfilling as the Savior the very words of Scripture? And so these two might be David's experience too.

Someone may have said to him, because he puts in quotes, He trusts in the Lord, let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights on him. These very well may have been expressive of David's experience too.

And I think it's important to point out that we know David as a king, don't we? But David was also, not only in practice as we read these psalms, a prophet, but he was identified as a prophet too.

And 1 Samuel, the Spirit of the Lord would come on David and the other would say that he would prophesy. And then when Peter actually gives his sermon in Jerusalem, he identifies David as a prophet explicitly.

[ 30 : 31 ] So David is speaking prophetically, pointing actually to something in the future, but that doesn't mean that he isn't experiencing that. And so we move then from this desolation to then to a description in verses 9 to 11.

He says, And so we're before in verses 3 to 5, he was giving reference to the knowledge that the covenantal community in the past had of the Lord.



Now he's actually being very specific in making this description a kind of declaration then of his own personally. He just acknowledges that it's the Lord is the one who took him from his mother's womb.

He was the one who he learned to trust in because of the way he actually came into this world and was looked after. And I think that it's really important for those of us who have that, for lack of a better word, privilege, right, to acknowledge God's grace in our life right from the moment we were born and even before that and how the Lord has looked after us.

And prayer is often that. It's actually looking for those indications of grace, the grace of God throughout our life. It's not to ignore the difficulties and certainly Psalm 22 does not ignore them.

[ 32 : 08 ] But in the midst of that, we can see this this grace of God. And notice notice this. He's not saying what I hear sometimes that it could be a lot worse. My life could be like such and such is.

Right. I've thought that from time to time is somehow to take kind of consolation in that. But that's not the Psalm of the covenant people. Right. It's not this kind of comparison.

Oh, life could be a lot worse for me. No, he's actually looking right to the Lord and seeing the way that the Lord has been gracious to him, provided for him, sustained him.

That's absolutely, I think, critical in these kinds of circumstances in our life to take note of what the Lord has done. So from there, the description continues in verses 12 to 18.

Lots of detail in this, aren't we? I don't have time to go over each detail, but but boy, oh, boy, how close it looks to what our Lord was experiencing.

[ 33 : 08 ] And David has given expression to on the cross as our savior. Many bulls compass me. Strong bulls of Boshan surround me. And then he goes into their open mouths like, sorry, roaring lions.

And just the pouring out then of Jesus's life like water. And the bones are out of joint. And this in detail is giving, not in every piece of detail, a point to Jesus's death on the cross.

But we're back in, I lived in Ann Arbor in 1988. My wife was involved in the Christian Medical and Dental Society. And they published a magazine, I think, kind of quarterly.

And some of the doctors in the organization decided that they would give some kind of description of what it was like to die on a cross. And just from a medical standpoint, what that was like.

And I don't think that we need to read that to appreciate the saving work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation.

[ 34 : 17 ] But boy, but this this this idea of all my bones are out of joint. You know, is as far as I can tell, I think that David's speaking prophetically here.

This isn't something explicitly that he, you know, I need to be careful, right? That he was the experience. But our Lord on the cross, all his bones were out of joint. Absolutely.

Absolutely. And so this is a this is a detailed description right down to the the end of verse 17 and 18. Though I can count all my bones, though they were out of joint.

They stare and gloat over me. Wasn't that what was going on when Jesus died on the cross? And they divided my garments among them. Check fulfillment of that. And for my clothing, they cast lots.

Check again. And we don't have anything in the narrative that that was the case for David. But here we are. We're being directed now as we pray this to our to our Savior. It's a cross like like description.

- [ 35 : 18 ] But from there, he goes from description to deliverance. Right. Here's this contrast word again. We've had a few of them already and yet. But but you, oh, Lord, do not be far off. There's this crowd. Oh, you, my help, come quickly to my aid. Deliver my soul from the sword. My precious life from the power of the dogs.
- And it's it's it's this gradual deliverance. Do you see that right? First, it's just it's don't be far off.
- It's kind of general. And then it kind of builds. Come quickly to my aid. You get the sense of urgency from it and then deliver. Well, what is he being delivered from that from the sword?
- It talks about the preciousness of life and then save me. And here we are again. The psalm about our about our Savior. This is the this is the in some sense the meat of this passage, which has to do with the deliverance, which is what he actually wanted.
- [ 36 : 16 ] And he sees himself in this community. I think that it's a covenantal community again that is committed to this. This deliverance, which comes by the Lord. OK, over to. Over to.
- Where am I? To 22. Yes. Just kind of I'm closing in this and quickly then so we can go on to Psalm 23. We see his his devotion.
- And after this, this description of deliverance. And there are just four parts to this devotion now that has he's kind of committing himself to the Lord all the way to the end.
- And the first one is volition. I'll just look at this. Verse 22 says, I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation. I will praise you. This is his volition. Volition.
- He's committing himself to this as a result of what he knows that the Lord is is going to do for him and that we know that the Lord has actually done for us on the cross. This is his.
- [ 37 : 15 ] This is his his volition, his commitment. This is what he'll do. He's not actually bargaining here. Right. Like we know that in some times when when when we pray, maybe you did this in the past and we know others.
- You know, God, if you give this to me, I will do this for you. It's kind of a bargaining. Right. And but only if you do this for me, will I actually do this for you. That's not that's not what David's doing.
- And that's not for for us as Christians either. We remain devoted to the Lord no matter what the outcome, because he is our Lord. He is our Savior. And we do make our petitions and we do have certain kind of aspirations.
- If we do get what the Lord gives us, we will be able to do something that we wouldn't otherwise. But it's not a kind of it's not a kind of a bargaining. Before that, he's demonstrating commitment to the Lord in volition.
- But in verses twenty five, twenty six, he then makes a vow from you comes my praise in the great congregation. You could describe this whole section as praise as well as devotion. And then he says literally my vows.
- [ 38 : 17 ] I will perform before those who fear him. He's committing to them no matter what. He's keeping keeping this covenant. The Lord has struck with him and these are his vows. And then he gives this great depiction of a vision in verses twenty seven to thirty.
- This is not just about him. He realizes that a lot more is at stake. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord. And all the families of the nation shall worship before you.
- For kingship belongs to the Lord and the rulers over all the nation. Look at how comprehensive actually this this vision of the reality of the saving work of the Lord.

And it finishes with and shall be told of the Lord. This is verse thirty to the coming generations. So he's telling forth of this this this work of the Lord. And then it ends actually what I describe as victory.

They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn that he has done it. It's pretty powerful. I don't know what you what you think about that. These weren't actually the words that Jesus spoke from the cross.

[ 39 : 22 ] But I think it's instructive this. You know, when Jesus died on the cross, he said by way of victory, it is finished. Right. He completed what he came to do.

I can't remember I've shared this with you before or not. But, you know, those words are absolutely kind of astonishing context of the Roman Empire because in a battle of the gladiators, when one defeated the other, he would stand over him and say, it is finished.

And what a kind of a twist. What a kind of an inverted, what an upside down. Here's the one who died. But through his death, the victory was accomplished.

It was finished. Resurrected from the dead three days later. Okay, that's Psalm 22. Let's go to Psalm 23, the one that you know much, much better.

And you know what? We're not going to get through this if I do Psalm 23 and 24. What do you think if I pass over Psalm 23?

[ 40 : 28 ] Is that okay? I'll just point out some things really kind of quickly about it, though, without going through it verse by verse. So Psalm 23, as I said, you know, it's about the shepherd.

If the previous one is about the Savior and the cross, this is about the shepherd and let's say his crook or his crozier, right? So if that kind of helps you remember these things, right? Calvin once referred to the world as a theater of God's glory.

And I think that you can say this in part about this Psalm 2. The context is it's in the created world as we think of the shepherd and his work.

In some respects, I think it takes us back to the beginning, not kind of explicitly in terms of those first seven days of creation, but this world in which I think the shepherd was immersed in was that kind of world.

And it was, you know, this world that we live in is a world that God declared was good. We know that sin entered into it and evil.

[ 41 : 29 ] I think that it's important to kind of note when we think about this Psalm, though, and the shepherd. And I just kind of learned this again the other day as I read through the creation narrative. You know, that when Adam and Eve sinned, the first curse, and we know that in those terms, the fall or the curse, the first curse was actually placed directly on the serpent, right?

The next person who's addressed is Eve. And the word curse actually isn't mentioned at all. But we know that there's going to be pain for her and childbirth, but the word curse isn't mentioned.

And then curse is used one more time, but it's not actually the man, Adam, who's directly cursed. It's the land that's cursed. I found it really, really helpful.

So God doesn't curse Adam and Eve in that it's the serpent in the land that's actually cursed. And so here we have this shepherd who's looking after the sheep.

We love this. Even though I think we know now that it's not meant to actually flatter us, is it? It's great that we have a shepherd. And it's important that we recognize that we're like sheep, but sheep are not all that kind of great as it comes to animals.

[ 42 : 46 ] Some of you are chuckling, and I know that you know that, so I won't go into the details of that, right? But it's great that we admit and acknowledge that the Lord is our shepherd and that we shall not want.

And it's in this theater of this God's glory, this created world that we have this psalm because the shepherd was there in that created world, ordering things day in and day out, looking after the sheep and looking after them in these world.

I think one of the things that's important to kind of recognize about this too is just the importance of metaphor in our psalms and in our prayers. You know, when we pray, how is it that we're praying?

How is it the psalms instruct our prayer life in this? And so God is depicted or described, maybe that's not right, but at least addressed as God is my rock, right?

There's a metaphor. God is my shield. There's another one. God is my light. There's another one. My fortress. It's just kind of endless, isn't it? God is revealed to us as Christians in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[ 43 : 59 ] But in these psalms, all these kind of metaphors are used and they're just close to the earth, physical, they're material, as it were. And so language plays a really, really big role in our prayer life in the psalms.

And so in the psalms, we have everything in terms of the whole experience of life, right? From pleasure to pain, from wonder to worry, anger to adoration, friends and enemies.

See that in this guilt, right? And grace, just madness and mercy. There's depression, there's depression, and at the same time, delight. And that whole kind of range of the experience that we're brought and is expressed in the psalms.

So this is Psalm 23, and I'm going to pass over that and just go to Psalm 24 now, okay? So Psalm 24 now is about the sovereign.

It's about the king. And if you need an image to think about that, just remember that Psalm 24 is about this king who has a crown, and the crown of this king is glory.

[ 45 : 14 ] And so just as Calvin had said that the world is the feeder of God's glory, he could have said about this. I'm not suggesting that he did say this.

But about this psalm, one could say that the world is also the realm of God's glory. So it's quite dramatic, but it's also this place where the Lord actually rules.

And it's important, I think, to come to this point because I think we might like the thought, and I know that we do, that the Lord is our shepherd. We know that he's our savior.

It's really important that we acknowledge that he's our Lord. He's our king. He's the one who rules over our life completely and entirely, personally for us and publicly, this whole world.

And so this psalm has, I don't know how to describe this for sure, but it's about this story of God's saving work as he shepherds his people, as he rules over them.

[ 46 : 18 ] And so after psalm 1 and 2, we're immersed into this story of God's saving, shepherding, kind of ruling work. You know, psalm 3 that follows immediately after 1 and 2.

What's that about? It's about this conflict between David and his son Absalom. Kind of nice story, right? No, not at all. But through this story, God is actually ruling.

We're being instructed, I think, and told, and that he's the one who this saving grace is being worked out in. But it is a story that's in time and place, and the great thing about the psalms, I think, that they do order our life day in and day out over the course of our life.

And so Psalm 4, then, is a psalm that lends itself well for actually evening prayer, and then Psalm 5 lends itself well for morning prayer.

And so we have this story of night and day and over time. And psalms are, while we always don't have an incident or an occasion about them, we know that they actually come out of this story of God's saving, ruling, reigning work in our life.

[ 47 : 35 ] Okay? Psalm 24 is often identified, as you might guess, as a kingdom psalm or a royal psalm. And it's interesting, isn't it, that the Lord always intended for his people to have a king.

Genesis 17, verse 6, God changes Abraham's name to Abraham, and he makes this covenant promise to him, right?

And in that covenant promise, he says that they'll be fruitful, that they'll be a nation, and that they will actually have kings. But it's later in 1 Samuel, right?

When Saul is identified as a king, Samuel is really grieved by this. And God says to him, you know, it's not you that they're rejecting.

It's actually me. And so God gives them that first king, Saul, who was not a good king, who didn't, like the following king David, have a whole heart after God.

[ 48 : 37 ] You might actually say that, yeah, that Saul had no heart for God, and Solomon was just a little bit better than Saul, wasn't he?

He had kind of maybe half a heart for God. It got started really well. That's not to say that things started and finished really, really well for David either. But that's just to say that this is a royal psalm, and it's one of these psalms that's expressive of the Lord, who actually is our king and the one who rules and reigns our lives.

So let's just look at this. Lots of points to the first psalm we look at, but Psalm 24, just three big ones, ABCs, actually ascension, blessing, and then finally just the confidence that we have in our Lord.

So Psalm 24, verse 1 begins with, The earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

And it goes into creation in verse 2, as you look at that, and then verse 3, he raises this question, doesn't he? But we see right from the beginning that the earth is actually the Lord's.

[ 49 : 48 ] And not only the earth, but everything that's therein, and everything, every being that actually dwells in it as well. This king of ours, David, is giving expression to this.

But in this question he says, Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? Great kind of question to even kind of ask of ourself, right?

What hill is David speaking of? Is he thinking of Zion, Mount Zion? Is he thinking of Jerusalem? He raises this question, Who shall stand in this holy place? We have no idea if this is before David became king, or as he was becoming king, or after he had become the king.

Is he looking for one to fulfill this other than himself? But he raises this question, this whole idea of ascension is being kind of brought to our attention right here in the beginning of Psalm 24.

And I just, as I read through this, I just think that it's astonishing, in some sense, the risk that the Lord, the king actually took in this world in which we live.

[ 50 : 59 ] Because we know that the earth is his, and the fullest of every kind of being is in it. And he's the one who's owner of it, but he entrusts this world, as it were, to us.

We're stewards of it. And we all know that, I think, that there's a difference between owning and renting, isn't there? If you can own.

But you know that if you do own it, you're more likely to take better care of it than if you rent. I've been in both situations. And renters just don't tend to take the same kind of care of it that the owners do.

God, who can only be the owner, the ruler over all creation, because he's the one who created, he entrusts this world to us as stewards.

And in some sense, you could say, well, what do you... Well, you know, this is kind of what was to be expected of us as sin entered in the world, and we are stewards of creation, that we're held to those standards and the standards that the Lord has set out for us.

[ 52 : 18 ] But we can't, or we don't, take the kind of care of this world which can be expected.

So anyway, let me just come back to this question. Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place? Well, in the end, there's only one, and it's the Lord Jesus. He's the one who ascends that hill.

He's the one who died on the cross. He's the one who's only holy and stands in that place. So that's the first thing, the ascension. The second part is the blessing then. Who can...

Sorry, the answer to this question is, he who has clean hands and a pure heart, he does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

And then continue on with verse 6. So these three verses, in answer to that question, is, well, there's only one, and the one who lives this blessed life.

[ 53 : 20 ] And this blessed life is described in terms of not only blessing, but also righteousness, who issues in the salvation of the Lord. But then we're kind of encouraged to pursue this life in verse 6.

Such is the generation of those who seek him and who seek the face of the God of Jacob. And I just love it that we're given qualifications for this blessing.

And it has to do with, I think, with the hands. Do you see that? Which directs our attention to strength. The heart, which has to do with our desire and our will.

The soul, which is mentioned, which, you know, we're created in the image of God. The Aaron is the likeness of God. But also our speech is expressed here. How we actually use that.

And as he uses the word, those who do not negatively swear deceitfully. And these are the ones that the Lord will bless by his grace. So blessing is the second part of this.

[ 54 : 24 ] And then finally we brought kind of right to what the psalm is ultimately about, which is about the king. And so he says, Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in.

Who is the king of glory? The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle. And then he repeats that and makes some changes to it. Right? At the second to last line, The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory.

That's what this psalm is about. It's about the sovereign. It's about the king. And we need this in our life, not just the Savior and the shepherd, but the one who rules over our life.

John Stott said in his book, The Cross of Christ, that if God is our Savior, then he is our sovereign. And I think it's just really important that we make that connection, but this actually makes that connection for us.

As we know that ultimately we need to, you know, we submit ourselves to the Savior who is at the same time our sovereign.

[ 55 : 28 ] And he is absolutely glorious. The word glory is repeated over and over again. And our imaginations, our life, in its totality are just captured by the glory of the Lord.

His life, his death, his resurrection. And what this is doing is kind of connecting us to his ascension. And so let me stop there. Please let me stop there and see if you have any questions about these three psalms or other psalms as well and how they lead us, they school us in prayer, but not only personally, but publicly as well.

Kurt? In Psalm 24, after verse 6 and verse 10, Yes? What does Selah mean to you?

Yeah. What does Selah mean to me? Let me ask you a question. Does it mean something to you? Well, I heard Maxine Hancock say that her mother said to her where she was in New Berlin and she asked that question.

The mother said, stop and think. Huh, huh. I don't think, my understanding is that we don't actually know what it means for sure.

[ 56 : 51 ] And so there is speculation on it. And so some speculate that it does actually mean a pause, right? That it would be used in congregational corporate worship and at that point there would be a pause.

I don't know what would become between the section after it while you were pausing. And you'll notice actually in Psalm 24, Selah is actually at the end of the Psalm.

So, you know, maybe in the synagogue there was something that would be followed after this so that you would pause before you went that too. But I haven't really kind of come down. I'm not really sure what it means.

So I know this probably is a good idea that, and you'll notice actually in our prayer book that the Selah actually isn't in there so that when we do actually read this congregationally that you don't read the word Selah.

So, sorry. I don't know what it means. Is it say that like a Hebrew word? I'm assuming, yeah, it must be.

[ 57 : 57 ] I'll look back in a dictionary for that. This is like a high-poetry type of stuff we're talking about. A metaphor, something that I agree with. A chloprian is. It doesn't kind of need all this stuff.

Thanks, John. Maybe Dr. Packer has a comment on that. Selah, yeah. You want to weigh in on Selah? I can only report that you are with the majority.

Nobody knows. I mean, you almost flips the pages of the commentaries and we soon discover. Nobody knows what, for sure, what Selah signifies.

But I'm sure you're on the right track in saying to us, as you are in effect, this is a point of significance.

Stop and think. And I can see, and surely we all can see, that stopping and thinking about the last thing said before the word Selah is used does have the effect of an emphasis.

[ 59 : 13 ] One way or another, we are to find emphasis here. But when I've said that, when the commentaries have said that, none of them know exactly what emphasis it is, whether it's the same measure of emphasis.

in each case, or whether in some way, it is the emphasis of God just coming close and saying, think about this and see what I give you as you do.

Right. And I must confess, that's the way of looking at it which has seemed to me the more attractive to my own thinking and the more suggestive of good things, good thoughts to think at the point where Siva is put.

But you can see, I'm not able to say anything definite for everybody because the bottom line is, like everyone else, I don't rightly know.

One of the things I appreciate about that is that often what we can do is just, and I confess that I do this in the times that I've read through the Psalms, you can tend to go too fast.

[ 60 : 49 ] Right? And we tend to not read out loud which lends itself to racing right through what we read and missing actually what the Lord actually has for us.

And it's really important, I think, to read the Psalms. Obviously we do kind of rationally out loud, but even personally and privately to read them out loud as well. And that's not even just for the Psalms, but it's for the rest of the book of the Bible as well.

It's really kind of interesting what you'll notice when you read it out loud when you don't. And I kind of, there are aspects of our current culture which I like and dislike, as I'm sure we all do, but you can also, you can also now get the Bible that's in audio and have it read as well.

And I just love listening to it as well because I pick up and hear things that I haven't when I've read through it myself. Which is also why we need to be in the congregation to hear it read out loud too and preached on because you'll hear and learn things that you just cannot by yourself privately and individually.

I noticed a couple questions. George first, in fact, and then Harvey? Oh, well, no, I was only going to comment. I've always, but Dr. Packer, as you have really said, I've always thought it meant miltus.

[ 62 : 10 ] Harvey? It may be, and I haven't thought of it before, it may be connected with this point. I'd like you to comment on just a simple idea. Bruce Walt, he always moved me.

bad ideas and disagree with Bruce. No, the song is better than anybody. Yeah, I took a seminar on this. He says, remember, he thinks, he does, he said, remember precisely, he didn't understand why, but he believed that God likes our passion.

And we, Psalm 22 is our remembering and our meditation on passion. And then we enter into it. That's, is, is, is, is, is, is, is, on passion?

I think, I think passion is important. And it's, it's interesting. I mean, this is one of the things that I, I don't know why, I've been wrestling with this, this recently, right?

Because article number one in our 39 articles says that God has no passion or parts. Which I, is always kind of, see what I mean? And that's because I think that God isn't, you know, God isn't caused or he isn't, I need to be careful about this.

[ 63 : 34 ] He's, he's the first cause, right? He's the thing that, he's not the thing, he's, sorry, he's the one who moves us, right? And, and he, you know, insofar as passion is good, it is when God moves our hearts and our souls and our minds and our strengths.

So I think that, I think passion is really important when that's the case. So I, so I do, I think Psalm 122 expresses that and the passion is direct, I think the passion is clearly directed towards the Lord.

Obviously, sometimes in the culture we use that, that word passion gets used in other ways and people have passion for a whole range of things and, and it can be mis, misdirected and, and not moved at all by the, by the Lord.

But when it is moved by the Lord then it, then it's good and, and here's the thing, always in the direction of the Lord but always, always for truth, right? I think that that's, there's a, that if we're going to have passion for, for anything or at least if there's an order for passion that's, that's, that's the direction that it would come in.

And there are some other things that would follow actually almost linear and align from that as well and, but passion and then truth and then you might actually put love or service after that and the love for God but love for your neighbor as your, as yourself.

[ 65 : 03 ] Could I notice Joe had a question? Joe. I appreciate that you, as soon as you talked about Abraham you, you turned to Samuel.

I'd like to sort of elaborate on what you had to say about kings. Right. It seems to me pretty clear that God was disappointed that Israel pushed for a king.

Yes, yes. he was happier with judges. Yes. And if you go back and look at what is said in Genesis, I'm not sure I'd be inclined to say that God promised Abraham kings.

I think he promised him offspring. And that the offspring, you know, if you're elaborating a little bit, will take the form of nations in the plural and kings in the plural because that is the way the world runs.



And I guess what I have off here is that king is a metaphor.

[ 66 : 25 ] and seeing God as a king when what we know of earthly kings is what we know, we may not be doing well to push too far with the notion of what we know of kings as the kingship of God.

right. Right. I mean, I I I I I I I I I I I'll just read Genesis 17 6 for you just so that we know that it actually does say king.

Right. Right. So I will make you exceedingly fruitful and I will make you into nations and kings shall come from you. So so it does explicitly say that.

And I think you're right. We have to be careful because what we know of kings but God also reveals himself to us as father and it's important that we don't kind of impute on to God our understanding of father and make him out to be that either.

And so we probably shouldn't do that with king. But you're right. God was disappointed because the trouble was that they weren't accepting his kingship in their life and his rule I wonder about the use of the word king in Genesis 17 6 as just a metaphor though.

[ 67 : 57 ] I'm not saying it's just a metaphor but I think the really important thing is that it's in the plural and that we look back to Abraham as the claim that we not just the chosen people the people of Israel and the Jews are encompassed.

Yes. Yes. And then ultimately this is what Psalm 24 is expressing in the fulfillment of Jesus Christ who then is the king.

I think in part I'm agreeing with you. But I do want to recognize that back in Genesis 17 6 it is the kings.

Yeah. Jason. A comment to kingship in Israel. God also told Moses that God is intended to make Israel a kingdom of priests.

So it's not really about God promising a king of us. It's God promising a type of king over the type of king people want.

[ 69 : 22 ] The people want at the time of Samuel after the debacle even especially after the book of Judges after Samson that they wanted a political king to lead Israel as opposed to a priestly king that is interceding with God that is interceding God promised a nation to Abraham in which blessing flows through to the rest of the world and to Moses God promised a priestly kingdom so it has a priestly role between Gentiles and people and

God I'm having a hard time following you I missed it I couldn't articulate it but it's a function of the king that is interceding versus the function of the kingdom that is political and ruling which is what the people are asking for I think that sort of articulating I'm not sure sorry it looks like you get the final comment and I'm getting a T sign I don't have a final comment sure she shall obey I'm going to Israel next week and I'm looking forward to ascending the holy hill and all those things but I was thinking about this last night it really struck me God chose to place his people in a very harsh land at least in the wilderness part of

Israel is a very very harsh and dry and hot land and they faced all kinds of enemies people that did not want to be pushed out of the land and still don't and they had to and he said to them I will be your God and you will be my people and he wanted to dwell with them dwell like he does with us now in us and with us and he often spoke to me God was telling me last night to trust me trust me trust me if you trust me and follow me you'll be blessed and that really struck me last night and so this study today really helped a lot with our shepherd our sovereign all those things that God is blessed I think I'm glad that you're going to Israel I've been there once as well and just one of the blessings about going there is it's important to read the scriptures in context it was in a place and a time wasn't it and if you don't know the geography it will help you when you're there it's important to remember that the

Lord is the king over all creation and his presence is with you here as much as it will be there there too