

THE PSALMS & THE PASSION (EASTER SUNDAY)

Psalms 2, 16 & 22

Church of Christ / 9301 Sheldon Road / Plymouth, MI 48170

Royce Dickinson, Jr. / 03.27.2005

Songs:

Lord, I Lift Your Name on High

He Has Made Me Glad

Victory in Jesus (vv. 1&3)

We Fall Down

Holy, Holy, Holy (vv. 1&3)

JESUS: THE SON OF GOD

¹Why do the nations rage?

Why do the people waste their time with futile plans?

²The kings of the earth prepare for battle;

the rulers plot together

against the LORD

and against his anointed one.

³“Let us break their chains,” they cry,

“and free ourselves from this slavery.”

⁴But the one who rules in heaven laughs.

The Lord scoffs at them.

⁵Then in anger he rebukes them,

terrifying them with his fierce fury.

⁶For the LORD declares, “I have placed my chosen king on the throne

in Jerusalem, my holy city.”

⁷The king proclaims the LORD’s decree:

“The LORD said to me, ‘You are my son.

Today I have become your Father.

⁸Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,

the ends of the earth as your possession.

⁹You will break them with an iron rod

and smash them like clay pots.”

¹⁰Now then, you kings, act wisely!

Be warned, you rulers of the earth!

¹¹Serve the LORD with reverent fear,

and rejoice with trembling.

¹²Submit to God’s royal son, or he will become angry,

and you will be destroyed in the midst of your pursuits—

for his anger can flare up in an instant.

But what joy for all who find protection in him!

(Psalm 2, NLT).

On this Easter Sunday, in the year 2005, we have assembled to worship Jesus the Son of God. Of all the Sundays during the year, Easter and Christmas need the least introduction. Today, we know why we are here. I am thankful that each of you in attendance has chosen to come to this worship service.

Psalms 2 speaks to God's people about the problem of living in a world where nations battle with one another for power. It promises that God will send a Messiah who will rule the nations.

Psalms 2 is the only text in the Old Testament that speaks of God's king, God's messiah, and God's son in one place: King, Messiah, Son—titles that are so important for the presentation of Jesus in the Gospels.

The declaration of God to the king, "You are my son," becomes, in the New Testament, the primary way of describing the relation of Jesus to God. In the Old Testament, "king" and "anointed" are more frequent and important titles, but in the New Testament, "son" becomes the prominent title for Jesus. After His baptism in the Jordan River, when Jesus came up out of the water, a voice from heaven declares, "You are my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you."¹ At the transfiguration of Jesus, a voice from the cloud declares, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."² The Apostle Paul began his letter to the Romans with these words:

¹This letter is from Paul, Jesus Christ's slave, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. ²This Good News was promised long ago by God through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. ³It is the Good News about his Son, Jesus, who came as a man, born into King David's royal family line. ⁴And Jesus Christ our Lord was shown to be the Son of God when God powerfully raised him from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:1-4, NLT).

When the risen Jesus announces to His followers, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations . . ."³—when He says this, we are hearing the fulfillment of Psalm 2, where the Lord God promises, "Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, / the

¹Mark 1:11, NLT.

²Mark 9:7, NLT.

³Matt 28:18f., NLT.

ends of the earth as your possession.”⁴

Jesus, He is God’s King, God’s Messiah, and God’s Son—and He is our redeemer.

Songs:

There Is a Redeemer

Fairest Lord Jesus

Christ, We Do All Adore Thee

JESUS: THE SUFFERING SAVIOR (PART 1)

¹My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?

Why do you remain so distant?

Why do you ignore my cries for help?

²Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.

Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief.

³Yet you are holy.

The praises of Israel surround your throne.

⁴Our ancestors trusted in you,

and you rescued them.

⁵You heard their cries for help and saved them.

They put their trust in you and were never disappointed.

⁶But I am a worm and not a man.

I am scorned and despised by all!

⁷Everyone who sees me mocks me.

They sneer and shake their heads, saying,

⁸“Is this the one who relies on the LORD?

Then let the LORD save him!

If the LORD loves him so much,

let the LORD rescue him!”

. . . .

¹⁶My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;
an evil gang closes in on me.

They have pierced my hands and feet.

¹⁷I can count every bone in my body.

My enemies stare at me and gloat.

¹⁸They divide my clothes among themselves
and throw dice for my garments.

¹⁹O LORD, do not stay away!

You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!

²⁰Rescue me from a violent death;

spare my precious life from these dogs.

²¹Snatch me from the lions’ jaws,

⁴Ps 2:8, NLT.

and from the horns of these wild oxen.

²²Then I will declare the wonder of your name to my brothers
and sisters.

I will praise you among all your people.

²³Praise the LORD, all you who fear him!

Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!

Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

²⁴For he has not ignored the suffering of the needy.

He has not turned and walked away.

He has listened to their cries for help.

. . . .

²⁷The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him.

People from every nation will bow down before him.

²⁸For the LORD is king!

He rules all the nations.

. . . . (Psalm 22:1-8, 16-24, 27-28, NLT).

Songs:

Lamb of God

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

JESUS: THE SUFFERING SAVIOR (PART 2)

When the Gospels tell the story of the passion of Jesus, the principal Old Testament resource used is Psalm 22. Psalm 22 is used to portray, and so interpret, the climax of Jesus' career.

Thirteen⁵ Old Testament texts appear in the passion story of the Gospels. Some are quotations and some are allusions. Of the thirteen, eight come from the Psalms. Five come from Psalm 22, two come from Psalm 69, and one comes from Psalm 31. All of these three psalms are prayers for help on the part of one who suffers.

The best-known connection between Psalm 22 and the passion story is Jesus' great cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani"—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!"⁶ Jesus' cry is a quotation of the first sentence of Psalm 22. But more than merely the opening words of this psalm is involved. According to the tradition of the time, citing the first words of a text was a way of identifying an entire passage.⁷ The very experiences of

⁵Depending on who's counting, perhaps the number is as high as seventeen. I have followed the assessment of James Luther Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation* (John Knox, 1994), 105.

⁶Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46.

⁷There were no chapter and verse divisions to which we are accustomed.

the psalmist become part of the scenario of the passion. We are invited to understand the passion of Jesus in terms of Psalm 22.

By telling the story of Jesus using Psalm 22, the Gospel writers affirm that in Jesus' faithful suffering, as in the psalmist's faithful suffering, God was present. God's presence with the afflicted and dying opens up new possibilities for understanding and living human life, as well as understanding and accepting death. The cry "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is an agonizing cry of loneliness; but it is also an affirming cry of loyalty, for it is "*My God, my God . . .*" Remember, Psalm 22 does not end on the note of desolation.

For he has not ignored the suffering of the needy.

He has not turned and walked away.

He has listened to their cries for help.⁸

Entrusting one's life to this kind of God, as the psalmist did and as Jesus did, changes everything. For instance, life can be understood not as a frantic search for self-satisfaction and self-security, but as a matter of dependence upon God. Suffering can be understood not as something to be avoided at all costs, but as something to be accepted—even embraced—on behalf of others—because one knows that God shares the suffering of the sufferer. Death can be understood not as the ultimate insult to human sovereignty, but as something to be entrusted to God with the assurance that nothing in all creation can separate us from God.

It is not surprising that Jesus embodied these transformed perspectives. He lived in humble dependence on God. He did not welcome suffering, but embraced it on behalf of others. He faced death with the conviction that God's power is greater than death's power. All of this may be summarized in Jesus' words, "Not what I want, but what You want."⁹ Jesus lived, like the psalmist, as one of the afflicted; and like the psalmist, He lived in the knowledge that God does not despise the afflicted. Rather, God loves the afflicted, and God shares their suffering. So Jesus, like the psalmist, gathered around Himself a community of the afflicted, the poor, the outcast. He sat at table with them,

⁸Ps 22:24, NLT.

⁹Mark 14:36.

and He still invites to His table those who are willing to live in humble dependence upon God rather than upon themselves.

That's what the Lord's Supper is all about: it is a *eucharist*, a thanksgiving established by a humble, trusting Son, and it is shared by the those who, like Him, are humble and trusting. All are invited to this table, and only those who think they are worthy, are unworthy to participate.

* * * *LORD'S SUPPER* * * *

* * * *GIVING* * * *

Songs:

Thank You, Lord! (Dennis L. Jernigan)

Thank You, Lord (Gary L. Mabry)

You Are My All in All

Amazing Grace (vv. 1&4)

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED LORD

¹Keep me safe, O God,
for I have come to you for refuge.

²I said to the LORD, "You are my Master!
All the good things I have are from you."

³The godly people in the land
are my true heroes!
I take pleasure in them!

⁴Those who chase after other gods will be filled with sorrow.
I will not take part in their sacrifices
or even speak the names of their gods.

⁵LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.
You guard all that is mine.

⁶The land you have given me is a pleasant land.
What a wonderful inheritance!

⁷I will bless the LORD who guides me;
even at night my heart instructs me.

⁸I know the LORD is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

⁹No wonder my heart is filled with joy,
and my mouth shouts his praises!
My body rests in safety.

¹⁰For you will not leave my soul among the dead
or allow your godly one to rot in the grave.

¹¹You will show me the way of life,
granting me the joy of your presence
and the pleasures of living with you forever.
(Psalm 16, NLT).

According to Psalm 16, you are what you trust. Who or what we trust is the defining characteristic that determines everything else about us. The psalmist confesses, “[LORD], You are my Master.”¹⁰

In particular, there are two especially impressive features about this psalm. First, every one of the lines of this prayer in all their variety says in one way or another, “The LORD is everything to me.” The LORD is my master, is my God, is my destiny, is my counsel, is my security. The LORD is my life. As we sang a few moments ago concerning Jesus, “You are my all in all.”

Second, the confession “All the good things I have are from You”—better translated “Apart from You I have no good thing”¹¹—this confession echoes throughout the psalm in its references to pleasant places, goodly heritage, complete joy, and pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16 is full of joy in the LORD. Life and joy go together, and where death is removed as a threat, life is finally free for complete joy in the presence of God, who alone can deliver us from the grave.

In the early church, Psalm 16 was read in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. In the Book of Acts, both Peter¹² and Paul¹³ quote verse 10—“For you will not leave my soul among the dead /or allow your godly one to rot in the grave”—both Peter and Paul see this hope fulfilled for the first time when God raised Jesus from the dead. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the last barrier between the LORD and life was overcome. Now, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is possible to profess Psalm 16 in the midst of life and in the face of inevitable death with a certain and confident trust that matches the language of this psalm. For the LORD has made known the path of life.

Abundant life is not something we achieve but something we receive. Those who entrust their lives to God experience a stability and joy and security that not even death

¹⁰Verse 2—“You [Yahweh] are my lord.”

¹¹Verse 2—NIV.

¹²Acts 2:24-32.

¹³Acts 13:35.

can undermine. In our contemporary world, the fear of death often motivates frantic and futile attempts to achieve our own security and our own joy. But Psalm 16 points in a different direction, in a direction that points to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Today, Easter Sunday, we come to the tomb of Jesus—and He is not there. We are here because He is not there. He is not in the tomb. Why should we remain there? Life is not in the tomb; it is in following the risen Jesus who burst forth from the tomb. He didn't stay there, and neither should we.

Life—it all boils down to who or what you trust. My trust is in the resurrected Jesus Christ. Therefore, come what may, it is well with my soul. Let us sing!

Songs:

Low in the Grave He Lay

Son of Man

It Is Well with My Soul

Closing Prayer

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