

The Prayer of Jesus from the Cross

Psalm 22:1-31

10 January 2021, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

In our sermon series on Mark's Gospel, we have come to the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and of His resurrection on the third day.

- This being so, I want to present to you a new Psalm of Focus which we will sing from every week until we finish Mark.
- The Psalm I have chosen is Psalm 22 which I will preach from today.

Psalm 22 is the Psalm the cross.

- Even though it was written by King David a thousand years before Jesus came, we have in it the very prayers that Jesus prayed when He died on the cross, anticipated by prophecy.

When it comes to properly understanding the Psalms, we should not read them as if we don't know about cross and the resurrection even though these happened long after the Psalms were all written.

- Some interpreters feel that they must read the Psalm only from the perspective that David and those who wrote them had at the time of writing.
 - But this misses the fact that those who wrote the Psalms wrote them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- Consequently, they were written in such a way that they spoke to those who read them at the time, but even more to those who live after the coming of Jesus Christ.
 - In 2 Corinthians 3:14-18, Paul speaks about how after Christ came, the Jews who rejected Him, were not able to understand the Old Testament rightly.
 - He says that it is as if they have a veil on their eyes that keeps them from understanding. The veil is only taken away when a person believes in Christ.
 - In 2 Cor 3:15-16, he says: **But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.**
 - The same thing applies to the Psalms.
 - They are songs that were written and collected because they are songs for God's church (His covenant people) to sing together under Christ our King and Priest.
 - Although David as king represented Jesus Christ, now that Jesus has come, we understand that Jesus is the head of the church who represents us when we sing, both as our King and as our High Priest.
 - These songs are about Him and about all of us His people in Him as our Lord and Saviour who brings us to God—
 - As you know, He Himself said, "No one comes to the Father but through Me."
 - You will never understand the Psalms if you read them and sing them without reference to Jesus Christ. Without Him, you have a veil over your eyes.

So I say again that this Psalm is especially the Psalm of the cross.

- It opens with the cry of Jesus recorded in the gospels that He made from the cross:
 - “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me,”
- Then it goes on to speak of those who ridiculed Him and challenged Him to come down if He was really the Messiah of God (v. 6-8)...
- And it even speaks of specific matters pertaining to the crucifixion, such as His bones being out of joint (v. 14), His heart melting (also v. 14), His thirst (v. 15), and even the piercing of His hands and feet which is very unique to the cross (v. 16). He also mentions the detail of how they cast lots for his only possession, the clothes on His back (v. 18).
 - All of these are things that are mentioned of His crucifixion in the gospel accounts.
- At verse 21, there is the sudden relief that He finds—corresponding to when He declared on the cross “It is finished,”—after which He promises to tell the church the good news that His suffering for their sins has been accepted, and ignites their worship.
 - Yes indeed, this is the Psalm of the cross. It cannot be properly be understood in any other way.

Now I invite you to listen as I read this Psalm to you—Psalm 22, from the start.

- This is the word of God:

Psalm 22:1-31: «To the Chief Musician. Set to “The Deer of the Dawn.” A Psalm of David.» My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?* ² O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. ³ But You *are* holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. ⁴ Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them. ⁵ They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed. ⁶ But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. ⁷ All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*, ⁸ “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!” ⁹ But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust *while* on My mother’s breasts. ¹⁰ I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother’s womb You *have been* My God. ¹¹ Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; For *there is* none to help. ¹² Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me. ¹³ They gape at Me *with* their mouths, *like* a raging and roaring lion. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water,

and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; ¹⁷ I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me. ¹⁸ They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots. ¹⁹ But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! ²⁰ Deliver Me from the sword, My precious *life* from the power of the dog. ²¹ Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me. ²² I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You. ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴ For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard. ²⁵ My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. ²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him will

praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. ²⁸ For the kingdom is the LORD'S, and He rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and

worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive. ³⁰ A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next* generation, ³¹ they will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done *this*.

May the Lord add His blessing to His holy Word.

I. See our Lord Jesus pleading with God the Father for acceptance in verses 1-21.

A. Understand that He is pleading here as a priest representing a sinful people.

1. Priests were appointed by God to offer sacrifices for sin that would make the people acceptable to God by atoning for their sins.
2. Jesus was unique in that He offered the only sacrifice that can actually take away His people's sins.
 - All other priests that God appointed offered animal sacrifices that were only symbolic of the sacrifice of Jesus.
 - Unlike any other priest, the sacrifice that Jesus offered was Himself.
 - He is the sinless Son of God who became human flesh in order that He might give Himself as a ransom for us.
3. And here, in verses 1-21, He is pleading earnestly (in the very midst of His sufferings) that the Father would accept this sacrifice for His people's sins.
 - If this prayer is not answered, no one can be forgiven by God.
 - Jesus is here bearing the church's sins and if He is not accepted, He and all His people would be left to perish in their sins and to go to hell forever.
 - This is what every human being deserves (except Jesus, who was without sin) and this is what every human being will experience apart from Jesus and His offering.
 - If you don't trust in Him, you have no offering for your sins.
 - If God were to accept you or anyone else without Jesus' sacrifice, He would be upholding that lie that your sin against God is trivial—just a little thing that can be overlooked without consequence.
 - And that would be to uphold a lie of the worst sort—a lie about the glory of God and about the honour that justly belongs to Him!
 - He is the most high God! He is holy! He is worthy of all honour and praise and obedience.
 - We are made in His image and our sin implicates Him and can be atoned by nothing short of the suffering of God's holy, righteous Son for us.
 - No other sacrifice is sufficient.

B. See how He pleads in these first 21 verses for God to accept His offering.

- He pleads in desperation and anguish, yet in faith, until He is heard.
1. In verses 1-5 He pleads as the one who has been cut off from God.

- a. In v 1 & 2, He says: **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?* ² O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent.**
 - He is cut off, as Isaiah put it, for the transgressions (or sins) of His people.
 - He, the Son of God, is rejected by the Father because He is bearing our sins. He has upon Him the guilt of what His people have done in all ages.
 - We, for whom fellowship with God is not nearly as important as it ought to be, cannot begin to fathom what it was like for Him to be cut off.
 - Here He was, charged with all of our sins—rejected by the Father that He has deeply loved for all eternity with a fullness that we cannot grasp.
 - He was cut off because He willingly associated with us in our guilt that He might represent us and redeem us.
 - b. But look at what sustains His hope—what keeps Him praying:
 - He knows that the people of the Old Testament era who lived before Him were accepted by God when they trusted in Him.
 - In verse 3, He says: **But *You are* holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. ⁴ Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them. ⁵ They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed.**
 - If this sacrifice that Jesus is now offering is not going to be accepted, God would never have accepted the likes of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, or Jeremiah—none of them—
 - But He did accept them when they trusted in Him.
 - That gives Him confidence to keep praying that His offering will be accepted even though He is presently cut off.
2. In verses 6-11, He pleads even though He is regarded by all as a worm and not a man.
 - a. The corrupt leaders of the church and their allies along with the people see Him on the cross and draw the conclusion that He is indeed a reject.
 - In a way, they were correct in that He was rejected, as we have seen, for our sins—but they conclude that He is rejected because of His own unrighteousness and they taunt Him.
 - Verses 6-8 say: **But *I am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. ⁷ All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*, ⁸ “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”**
 - You can see their wicked logic. “He would not be on the cross if He were really the Messiah. He would not be on the cross if He were a righteous man.”
 - They did not consider that it was for His people’s sins that He suffered.

- b. He finds encouragement to keep praying because He remembers that God the Father brought Him forth from the womb and preserved Him for this hour—that He might make this offering.
- In verse 9 & 10 He says: **But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God.**
 - The Father has brought Him to this hour, so even though no one else regards Him, He is encouraged to pray (v. 11): **Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.**
3. In verses 12-21, He pleads as the one whose own people have put Him on the cross where His very life is being poured out.
- a. He describes His enemies as vicious beasts—bulls who are known for their fierceness (v. 12), raging lions who devour their prey (v. 13), and dogs—not pets, but curs who have formed a pack and closed in on Him...
- In verse 16, He says: **“For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet.”**
 - These enemies, including the highest court of the church, have delivered Him over to the Romans to be crucified—all because He was a righteous man whose righteous life exposed their sin and their need of redemption.
- b. He knows that His very life is being poured out here—think of it—He who is the author of life and the sustainer of life is now losing His life.
- He who cannot die has been made flesh so that now He is dying for His people on the cursed cross.
 - From verse 14, He says: **I am poured out like water** [His very life is poured out], **and all My bones are out of joint** [as one hanging on the cross]; **My heart is like wax** [the heart surrounds with fluid on the cross]; **it has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd** [His life is going out of Him], **and My tongue clings to My jaws** [He who gives the living water is desperately thirsty]; **You have brought Me to the dust of death** [He is on the brink of the grave—the humiliation of man made who returns to dust]. **16 For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet** [there He is, suspended on the cross between earth and heaven, rejected by both as one cursed, for it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree].
 - In verse 18, they show their disdain for Him dying by casting lots for His only possessions—the clothes on His back. How cold to do this before a dying man.
 - What a humiliation for the holy righteous Son of Life!
- c. But you see how He continues to pray earnestly that God the Father will accept His sacrifice—knowing that He will!
- beginning with verse 19: **But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! 20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. 21 Save Me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen!**
 - He knows that this will not be the end.
 - He knows that God will accept His offering for His people's sins.

- He has nothing more to offer—the phrase “my precious life” is literally “my only one.”
 - He has nothing else to offer for our sins.
 - There is nothing else to be offered or that could be offered.
- God will not therefore leave Him in His enemies’ hands.
 - He will not leave His people to perish in their sins.
 - He will surely accept the only offering that His Son has which has now been given.
 - And indeed He does accept it!

II. See how our Lord Jesus announces with jubilation that He has been answered!

A. At the end of verse 21, the New King James has the words “**You have answered Me**” set off from the rest of the verse.

1. This is actually a very good way to translate the Hebrew here.
 - Some Bible versions mix the declaration “You have answered Me,” in with the rest of the verse and translate it as if Jesus is still asking for deliverance.
 - For example, the NIV, which is not as literal as other translations, has:
 - **Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.**
 - This assumes that the verse is a mere parallelism (where something is repeated with different words) when grammatically, the parallelism is broken both by the word order and by a change from an imperfect to a perfect tense.
 - The change in tense is picked up the English Standard Version which, as might be expected, has a good translation that shows the change from a prayer to a declaration that God has answered His prayer. It has:
 - **Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen.**
 - But this would be better if it reflected more fully the break in the parallelism not only by the change in tense, but also by setting of the word that means “You have answered Me” from the rest of the verse as the New King James has it:
 - **“Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.”**
2. This break in the parallelism is meant to stand out.
 - You would expect a parallel statement here when verse begins, but instead you get this declaration that this desperate prayer of Jesus has been heard!
 - He as our priest, and His offering of Himself for our sins has been accepted.
 - The Father has heard Him and He is no longer in distress to be heard.
 - This corresponds to His remarkable declaration that He made while He was still hanging on the cross: “**It is finished!**”
 - Even though His body was still as bloody as ever and the pain of the nails and of His bones out of joint and His heart like wax were still as present as ever,
 - He recognises that the Father has now accepted His offering.
 - “**You have answered Me**” is the jubilant cry.

B. You can see clearly in any translation the tone of His prayer completely changes at this point.

1. He changes from vehement cries that God, who has not accepted His offering yet, would accept it,
 - to glad promises that He will tell the whole church that the Father has accepted His offering for their sins...
 - starting with those who believe in Israel and extending it to all nations from one generation to the next.
2. The great change occurs when the parallelism is broken off from “Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen...”
 - to “You have answered Me.”
3. God has accepted the offering of His Son and that means the church that was not yet redeemed is now redeemed.
 - The promise was there for Abraham and Moses and the saints of old, but the offering was not finished until the Son of God was made perfect (all that we needed Him to be) through suffering so that His offering was accepted.
 - He had to actually go the cross.
 - Before He did, the Old Testament saints were accepted through faith in what would be done, but on the cross, the work was done and right here the shift was made from Old Testament worship to New Testament worship.
 - Old Testament worship was by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, and circumcision, but New Testament worship is by the declaration of what God has done to save us through Jesus Christ crucified.
 - Jesus has completed what God requires.
 - Jesus has been accepted as the perfect offering for our sins by which we have full and complete forgiveness through faith.

TRANS> Now let’s move on to look at the third part of our Lord’s prayer from the cross.

III. See our Lord promising to lead His sheep in New Testament worship.

- There is now more reason to worship the Lord, to adore Him, to praise Him with true delight in Him than ever before.
 - By the cross, God is revealed in a fuller way than He had ever been revealed before, and Jesus is here telling the Father that He will initiate and maintain that worship.

A. He will begin by telling His people what God has done and leading them in praise.

- This is what He promises in verses 22-26.
 1. He begins by promising to the Father in verse 22: **“I will declare your name to my brethren, in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to you.”**
 - a. The word *assembly* refers to His people gathered for worship.
 - In both the Old and the New Testament, God’s people are called an assembly.
 - The word translated “church” in the New Testament actually means “assembly”

- It is so much a feature of God's people that they are the people who assemble to praise Him that they are called an assembly or a church.
- b. But you will notice that in the first part of the verse He also calls them His *brethren*.
- In Heb 2, which we read earlier, this verse was quoted and we were told that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren because He is one with us and because God made Him perfect as the captain of our salvation through sufferings.
 - So His brethren are the people who trust in Him and so are part of the assembly of the redeemed.
- c. Note well what He does to initiate their praise now that He has been heard.
- First, He declares God's name to them and then He sings praise in the midst of them—He leads them in praise for what God has done.
 - *Declaring God's name* in the Bible always means that you tell people who God is, you reveal things about Him.
 - In this case, the thing that is revealed about God is that He is the God who sent His Son to redeem us by giving His life for our sins, and that He has graciously accepted His offering.
 - This gives worshippers in the New Testament a greater reason to praise God and to adore Him than ever before.
 - At first, Adam and Eve had creation. They were to gather every seven days to praise God as the Maker of the heaven and the earth in six days.
 - Then, after they fell, and God promised redemption, they had the promise of redemption as an additional reason to praise Him.
 - And after the flood, for that rescue, and after Egypt when He gathered them as their own nation under Him with ordinances to keep them in waiting until the Messiah came, they had that to praise Him for.
 - But now we have the revelation of Him as the God who sent His Son into the world to redeem us by the cross.
 - In this we see His beauty and glory.
 - He is the God whose justice demanded nothing less than the sacrifice of God the Son—truly He is holy and righteous!
 - He is the God whose wisdom devised this plan for our salvation—what a remarkable plan it is.
 - He is also revealed as the God whose love and mercy is so great that He was willing to send His Son—and as the Son, to come.
2. Verses 23-26 develop this theme of Jesus leading those who fear God in Israel to praise God for accepting His offering for them.
- a. In verse 23 He calls those who fear God that are from Israel to join in the praise of God:
- Verse 23 says: **“You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!”**

- Indeed, Jesus went to His disciples as soon as He had risen from the dead and He told them the good news of the gospel—that God has now accepted His sacrifice for their sins.
 - In verse 24, He gives this as the reason for praising God: **For He [the Father] has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;**
 - In other words, the Father did not despise or reject His offering for their sins as something inadequate—no indeed... the verse goes on: **Nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard.**
 - Like we saw in verse 21—Jesus our priest was finally heard by the Father so that He said, **“You have answered Me.”**
 - As Jesus says here, when the afflicted one cried, God did not hide His face from Him, but heard Him.
 - The Father said of His offering, “It is good...it is sufficient...it is enough!”
- b. In verse 25 & 26, Jesus promises to maintain this praise among His people—He will keep those that the Father has given Him.
- 1) In verse 25, He describes it as a vow of praise: **“My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.”**
 - When we gather for worship each Sunday, we do so because Jesus has called us to do so.
 - Our gathering to praise God for our salvation in Jesus is the fulfillment of Jesus’s vow to the Father.
 - That is one of the reasons we ought not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.
 - 2) In verse 26, Jesus promises to the Father that He will feed us so that we will continue to praise Him.
 - **The poor shall eat and be satisfied;**
 - We are poor because we do not have in ourselves what we need for salvation or for continuing in God’s grace.
 - He feeds us by declaring the gospel to us (as we saw in verse 22 where He said that He would declare God’s name to us) by word and sacrament.
 - He has provided ministers for His church and commanded them to feed His flock with the word and sacrament.
 - That is how He maintains praise in His church as the rest of verse 26 shows us: **Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.**
 - He concludes verse 26 with a blessing for these who engage in true New Testament gospel worship:
 - **Let your heart live forever!**
 - Indeed, their heart will live forever.
 - Jesus blessing is not an empty wish. It is potent and powerful.
 - Those who have received the gospel will continue to praise God for all eternity for what He has done.

TRANS> After igniting praise and making provision for it to continue in His people in Israel,

B. Jesus promises in verse 27-29 that He will gather the whole world to join in the praise.

1. When God established His covenant with Abraham, He told him that He would not only bless him and his descendants, but that all the families of the earth would be blessed in his seed—that is, in Christ.

- It was not until Jesus came and was accepted as an offering for our sins that God extended His mercy to the nations.

- It is remarkable that as soon as the Jesus came, the gospel, though largely rejected in Israel, began to spread to the nations so that they also came to worship God who was revealed through Jesus crucified.

- The nations came to receive God’s salvation in Jesus through faith and also became God’s worshippers with those in Israel that fear God.

2. Verse 27 declares it: **“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You.”**

- We are the fulfillment of that today—we are Gentiles who have become worshippers of God through the Son whose sacrifice He accepted.

- Verse 28 reminds us that the world rightly belongs to God and that He has authority over it.

- It says: **“For the kingdom is the LORD’S, and He rules over the nations.”**

- The world does not belong to Satan or to us—it belongs to God, for He made it, and it is only right that we should be His worshippers—especially when we learn of His mercy through Christ!

- Yes, verse 29 tells us that even the prosperous nations will come when the Lord shows them that despite their prosperity, they don’t even have what it takes to keep their souls alive.

- They come to feed upon Christ, the crucified one, with Jesus’ disciples in the great assembly—the holy catholic or universal church.

- Verse 29 says: **“All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive.”**

- They rejoice to have found life in Jesus Christ crucified and accepted by the Father for all that come to Him for mercy and eternal life.

➤ Yes, what God has done in Christ is too great a thing to be confined to Israel.

- It has spread to the nations of the world.

- But that is not all.

- It is also too great a thing to be confined to one generation.

- What the Father did through His Son calls for praise from each succeeding generation.

C. Jesus tells the Father in verse 30 and 31 that He will keep the praise going from generation to generation.

1. Each generation will tell the next generation that they might come to God and serve Him also—that they might join in the assembly that praises God and honours Him.
 - These verses say: “A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next* generation, they will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done *this*.”
2. God’s people will keep telling the next generation that God has accepted Jesus’ offering for the sins of His people.
 - God has promised that He will bless His people along with their children.
 - It is only through our sin and negligence that we don’t lead the rising generation to serve God.
 - If we do, the Lord is always pleased to bestow His salvation on them.
 - Much more, He sees that this is done.
 - Certainly not in every case—but in such a way that there is always a people on the earth who receive God’s salvation and who praise Him for sending His Son and for accepting His offering for our sins.
 - The reason there is a church today with a Bible and a people engaged in gospel worship is because every previous generation has declared God’s righteousness through Christ to the next.
 - There will always be a growing church in the world.
 - Jesus has promised the Father that He will gather and preserve a people to praise Him, and the Father has given to Jesus those who will come to Him for the salvation that He purchased on the cross.

Conclusion:

Let me ask each of you. Have you become part of this worshipping assembly that praises God for accepting the affliction of the afflicted one for the sin of the world?

- Have you seen that no matter how strong or how prosperous you are in this world, you can’t even do the most basic thing of all and keep your soul alive?
 - And do you see that the reason for that is that God has sentenced us to death and everlasting punishment because of our sins?
 - And that the only way that you or anyone else can be delivered from God’s judgment is by trusting in the one and only Saviour, Jesus the Son of God, who gave Himself for our sins on the cross and whose sacrifice was accepted by the Father?
- He does not make it difficult.
 - He simply says, “Look unto Me and be saved.”
 - Trust in Him and He will restore you to the Father so that you can be His worshipper along with all in the church who believe.