

King Jesus' Song of Humiliation

Psalm 131:1-3

Halifax: 26 January 2020

Introduction

As most of you know, we are currently studying the Gospel of Mark in our regular morning sermon series.

- As most of you also know, we have long had the custom of taking a psalm every few weeks as a kind of theme song that is related to our current sermon series.
 - We call this theme song our Psalm of Focus.
- For the past several weeks now, Psalm 24 has been our Psalm of Focus.
 - Psalm 24 begins with the description of the people of God asking who may come to Him. No one is able, until the LORD of Glory Himself comes to be our king!
 - He is accepted, not just as an individual, but as the king of us, a people who have no righteousness or merit of our own—only what He gives us.
 - We took Psalm 24 up when we got to Mark 6:30 where Jesus feeds the 5000, because it was from this point that Jesus began to do many signs that showed that He was the King of Glory who provides His church with what we need.
 - This revelation of Him as the King of Glory among us reaches its climax in Mark 8:27-30 (which we looked at last week) where Peter and the apostles finally confess that Jesus is the Christ—the Messiah God promised from ancient times who would come and save His people from their sins.
- The disciples now supposed that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to be crowned with royal honours and to be exalted as the ruler of the world.
 - But instead, as we will soon see, Jesus begins to tell them that He is going to Jerusalem to be crucified. And He teaches them that following Him will involve deprivation and self-denial for them also.
- We might say that in Mark 8:31 – 10:52, the section of Mark that we will be looking at for the next couple of months, Jesus shows His disciples (and us) what it means to be the Messiah of the people who, though called by God to be His holy people, are still a sinful, guilty, defiled people.
 - It is not a glorious regal position of honour that He is given as their king, for He must bear their shame and guilt.
 - He takes a lowly place by becoming their king.
 - His is not to lead a noble people, but rather to bear the reproach of a corrupt and defiled people.
- The world wants and expects their kings to be highly exalted.
 - It reflects badly on them to have a king that is lowly and without regal splendour.
 - Israel did not want a king like this either.
 - But Jesus their king, our king, did not have noble servants or a great palace or royal attire.
 - Ours is a king who is cursed and dies on a cross.
 - The cross is the very thing that we glory in if we are true Christians.
 - His beauty is His willingness to bear the curse for His people.

- Mark 8:31 – 10:52 teaches us that the way of King Jesus and of His disciples in this world is the way of the cross—it is the way of lowliness and humiliation.

This being so, the song I have chosen for our Psalm of Focus as we work our way through Mark 8:31 to 10:52 is Psalm 131.

- I have given it the name, “King Jesus’s song of humiliation.”
- Today I am going to expound this Psalm to you, and then we will sing it today and in the weeks that follow as we study about the mission of King Jesus.

Listen as I read our text to you from Psalm 131.

- Give very careful attention because this is the holy word of God.

Psalm 131:1-3: «A Song of Ascents. Of David.» LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. ² Surely I have calmed

and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. ³ O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forever.

May the LORD add His blessing to the reading and now to the preaching of His holy word.

In Mark 6:30 – 8:30, Jesus’ disciples had come to realise that the King of Glory had come in among their nation...

- But now they must be taught (as we shall see in Mark 8:31 – 10:52) the mind-boggling, horrendous reality of what He, the Lord of hosts, is going to do!
 - It was hard enough for them to believe that the Son of God had come in human flesh—it was inconceivable to them at this time that He should go to the cross.
- Psalm 131 is His song in which He declares His acceptance of the lowly place to which the Father has called Him.
 - That is our first point as we look this Psalm.

I. Jesus declares to the Father that He has accepted His lowly place as our king.

A. As our king, He does not see Himself as in a place of honour and dignity.

1. First He says, “**My heart is not haughty** [a word that simply means “high”] **nor are my eyes lofty.**”
 - The throne that He has accepted does not put Him in a high place, in a place of superiority, but in a lowly degraded place.
 - It does not cause Him to look for special treatment or honours—to have lofty eyes like most kings have—expecting esteem and reverence.
 - It puts Him in a place of dishonour where He will be scorned and spit upon.
2. David, who penned this Psalm by the Spirit of God (you can see in the title that it is said to be “of David”) was a beautiful model of this humility.

- He was anointed king ten years before he took the throne in Judah, and during those ten years he was hunted like a partridge in the wilderness by King Saul who was jealous of him—
 - yet, though David had opportunities to kill Saul, he utterly refused to do so—waiting for God to exalt him and put him on the throne.
 - And then for seven and a half more years, he waited to become the king of Israel as well as Judah.
 - And once he did become king, he did not elevate himself over other men, and especially he did not elevate himself before God.
 - He was humble and submitted to God (with only a couple of exceptions when he lost his focus).
 - His overall carriage was one of lowliness before God, recognising that he and his people were sinners who lived by the grace and mercy of God.
 - When trouble came, his cry was for mercy, not for justice.
3. King Jesus, to whom this Psalm properly belongs, was all the more humble—an example of perfect humility before God.
- He had left the glories of heaven to come here in lowly human flesh, to represent a nation that was lost in sin and needed to be redeemed.
 - He stepped into a very lowly place as the one who was to represent people who, like all people, were condemned for their sins and who deserved to go to hell.
 - Not just that they were unfortunates who had been given a harsh sentence, but that they were so guilty that they, like of all of us, deserved eternal punishment.
 - As a king of such a people, Jesus considered it inappropriate to have regal honours in this world.
 - The second part of verse one says, “**Neither do I concern myself** (literally walk about) **with great matters, nor with things too profound** [marvellous or wonderful] **for me.**”
 - It was not for Him to go about as one lifted up in pride, but in shame as one going to the cross to bear His people’s sin and shame.
 - He expected to be treated as an outcast, as the scum of the earth, as an unclean and ignoble one...
 - the king of a band of wretches who were on eternal death row and who deserved nothing else.
 - Such a king does not wear golden crowns and sit on an ivory throne, but a crown of thorns and a hewn cross for a throne.
- B. What a marvellous thing this is! How His true nobility shines through in His condescending love.
1. We often read the stories of princes who fall in love with beautiful and gracious women of low standing,
 - and we cheer as these kings break protocol and take these women as their wives.

- But what Jesus did far excels such condescending love!
2. Here is the prince who chose to associate, not with those who were beautiful and gracious, though lowly, but with those who were defiled, unkind, unloving, full of deceit and hypocrisy, in no way attractive or alluring to Him...
 - He came to associate with these that He might bear their iniquity—that He might go before His Father as an offering for their sins to be cursed and rejected that they might be pardoned and redeemed.
 - He came with plans to begin the slow process of transformation that He might take them and make them lovely who were not lovely at all.
 - He came to do this gracious saving work at tremendous cost to Himself.
 3. His is the ultimate self-sacrificial love and mercy.
 - Love first of all to His Father to whom He restores these ruined defiled people;
 - but love also to them, for though they were defiled, He, as well as His Father, had loved them from before the foundation of the world.
 - So we see Him in Mark—and in the other gospels—walking with disciples whose association makes Him unworthy of honour in this world...
 - But much more unworthy than that because they are, like all of us, wretched condemned sinners who make Him worthy of shame and cursing.
 - Yet, how gracious, how patient—He has accepted His place as their king—a place of infamy and shame.
 - **“LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty, neither do I walk about in greatness nor in things to wonderful for me.”**
- C. He endeavours, as we shall soon see in Mark, to teach His disciples this lowliness.
1. As those who read Mark, we need to personally recognise that His lowliness and shame was also because of our sin.
 - We must realise inappropriate it is for us to be proud when it was our sin just as much as anybody else’s that put the Son of God on the cross.
 - How lowly we should be in this world—not haughty, not having lofty eyes...
 - Let us gladly bear His reproach in this world for Him, the One who bore reproach here on account of us... truly it is our reproach.
 2. His disciples do not understand this in Mark, as we will see, but continue to talk of the honours and greatness they hope to attain by association with Him.
 - They are constantly scandalised, and miss His plain speaking about the cross that He must bear, and the crosses that they must bear in this world.
 - But they learn soon enough, and then these lessons become effective—they become effective after the cross,
 - After they see that Christ had to bear their sins, and after they see what He had to bear—then they cheerfully take up their own cross and follow Him and can testify with Him:

- **LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me.**

3. But now I must ask you at this juncture... have you been to the cross?
 - Is that your testimony—that your king, by association with you, became the king of shame and reproach who was cursed by God...
 - And that your heart is not lifted up nor your eyes lofty?
 - That you do not expect to be treated well in this world, but willingly bear His reproach? That you willingly suffer the pains of the curse, bearing reproach until He returns in glory?

II. Do not think that it is an easy thing. It takes great effort to deny yourself.

- A. King Jesus testifies that it was a painful struggle for Him to become lowly.
 1. Do not think that it was easy for Him to be treated so badly.
 - a. He wanted to be respected, loved, thought well of, esteemed, rewarded, honoured, blessed, given comforts and enjoyments.
 - These are good things and they are right and fitting for us human beings had we not rebelled and fallen into sin.
 - We were made to enjoy the good gifts of God, we were made to delight in being mutually respected and loved by others.
 - These are not things to be despised, but things to be cherished.
 - b. Every insult, every slight, every cold response, every stripe, every deprivation deeply wounded our Lord Jesus.
 - He was not a cold creature who had no feelings. He was a warm hearted man with a rich and vibrant soul—a full soul...
 - We saw Him when He was rejected by His own family and neighbours at Nazareth—we saw how He marvelled at their unbelief—it was a painful amazement that they could be so hardened.
 - We saw also how He was wounded deep within His spirit when the Pharisees demanded a sign from heaven after He had given them so many signs.
 - He actually had deeper feelings than any of us—our feelings have been blunted by the fall... by our shallowness and lack of affection...
 - But Jesus, as hard as it was, learned to accept these things as that which was appointed by His Father in justice as the One who associated Himself with our shame and guilt.
 - He had to accept this foul treatment and not rebel against it.
 - c. But above all this... it pained Him beyond what we will ever comprehend to be forsaken by His heavenly Father on the cross.
 - The Bible speaks very truly when it says there was no sorrow like His sorrow. There never will be sorrow like His sorrow.

- His love for the Father greatly surpasses our love, and His sense of shame for sin greatly surpasses our sense of that shame...
 - Truly, it was no easy thing for Him to accept this from His Father's hand. He despised the shame of the cross.
 - He had to learn obedience through the things that He suffered as He shed tears and poured out His soul before the Father.
 - **Hebrews 5:6-8: As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"; ⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.**
2. So you see that in this Psalm, He says that He had to quiet and calm His soul.
- His soul was like our souls...
 - a. Like our souls, it cried out for the good things of life. It yearned for love and acceptance... and He was unnaturally and wrongfully deprived of these things.
 - He had to labour to accept His depravation.
 - He had to bring His soul into compliance with the will of His Father, as seen in His prayer in the garden, "Not My will, but Yours be done."
 - That was said through much struggle and suffering as He said that His soul within Him was overwhelmed.
 - His anguish was so intense that sweat mingled with blood oozed from His pores.
 - He did not want to be cut off and reproached, cursed by His Father... He would have been a monster if He had wanted that.
 - But because of sin, the sin of the world, He accepted that He must be brought low and deprived of the things that human beings would otherwise constantly enjoy.
 - He was willing to bear things because of the circumstances of a ruined world that His Father sent Him to redeem.
 - That made it just, but it did not make it easy.
 - b. But you see that He speaks of reaching the place of acceptance as a kind of victory that He won—as something He accomplished.
 - It does not say that His soul became calm and quiet—
 - We often think that we have no control over such things.
 - But you see that it says that He calmed and quieted His soul—it was something He had to work at.
 - His soul rightly cried out for what He could not now have, just as our souls do.
 - It was not calm and quiet.

- It was yearning with all that was in Him for something other than the cross and the rejection of the Father.
 - But He laboured to make it calm and quiet and He succeeded.
- c. He compares His soul to a weaned child (in verse 2).
- A child who is weaned has accepted that it cannot have its mother's breast milk—and is no longer looking for or expecting that.
 - The child has accepted that this is best at this time and is no longer demanding what it can no longer have.
- 1) Thus we see Jesus, in Mark 8:31 – 10:52, fully accepting the fact that He must go to the cross.
- He jealously guards that commitment when His disciples oppose it.
 - He is very deliberate in attesting to His disciples in this part of Mark that He is committed to going to Jerusalem to bear the cross and that He will not tolerate the voicing of any objections from them.
 - He has quieted and calmed His soul so that He is ready to go to Jerusalem.
- But note well! The struggle does not end at this point.
- 2) The struggle will be intensified and renewed at Gethsemane when He gets closer to the cross.
- Then He will have to struggle harder than ever to wean His soul from its desire and to accept the shame of the cross.
 - There is a sense in which He has go through the weaning process all over again on the night in which He is to be betrayed.
- It is a great deprivation, like the child taken from the breast, but it is a deprivation that He has fully accepted as He goes to Jerusalem.
- He accepts it at each stage—in Mark 8 in making His way to Jerusalem... and then in Mark 14 in fully yielding on the night He is betrayed—but not without much struggle and anguish and many tears.
- B. Don't expect it to be easy for you to accept the lowly place of a servant of Christ in this world either.
1. It will require you to stretch every nerve to learn to accept deprivation... to wean your soul.
- There will be things, good things, that you want, but cannot have in this world.
 - There will be good things that are taken from you—your health, your loved ones, your respect, your acceptance, the approval and love of others.
 - You may have to bear the job loss or rejection of family because of Christ.
 - Things will often be very difficult, but you must learn to calm and quiet your soul that you might calmly accept what God has appointed for you now.
 - It will be hard, but that is no excuse for giving in to your sin—what we too often do when we do not have what we want.

- We can't get something in a lawful way, so we reach for it in an unlawful way—something Jesus never did.
 - The battle is fierce.
2. But let me tell you, Jesus is there to help you calm and quiet your soul.
- He knows more about this than you do.
 - The temptations you have had to bear are not even close to those that He has borne.
 - You may think it was easier for Him to bear deprivation of the things that He wanted because He never gave in to sin, but it was actually harder because He loved good things like being loved and accepted more—much more—than you do. He had to be deprived of these things through no fault of His own. He had to bear reproach on account of our sins.
 - He is a master at dealing with temptation and you are encouraged to come to Him in your time of need—He is available to you if you trust in Him.
 - Heb 4:15-16: **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.** ¹⁶ **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**
 - Our Saviour reminds us of the greatness of our heavenly Father, or His love for us, of His gracious work in saving us, of how good and how important it is for us to bear deprivation in this world as those who are prone to rebellion—and who rebelled in our first parents.
 - He helps us to wean our souls, to calm and quiet them, so that we can testify with Him:
 - **Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.**
- C. One more thing I want to mention about this verse is the word *surely* that appears in most English translation... *Surely I have calmed*...
- This is an attempt to reflect an oath formula that is in the original.
 - Jesus is not only testifying, but He is actually swearing before the Father that He has calmed and quieted His soul.
 - Why is such an oath needed?
1. He swears that He has brought His soul into this state to set Himself to stay on the course for the future.
 - He reminds Himself that He is committed to go to Jerusalem—you know how we are told that He set His face to go.
 - He is not going to turn back.
 2. He swears like that (secondly) to testify to His Father in heaven.
 - He is committed to accept His lowly condition and to bear the reproach of the cross as He has been called to do.

- By swearing like this, He assures the Father that He is committed to His calling to bear His peoples' sins.
3. He swears (thirdly) for our sake, the people of the church who trust in Him.
- He wanted to assure us that He would fulfill His calling so that we could have hope in Him.
 - What if He hadn't calmed and quieted His soul from its passion for love and acceptance and the good things God gives to His own?
 - He would not have been able to endure the cross for us.
 - We would still be in our sins.
 - This swearing that He has calmed and quieted is soul prepares us for the next verse in this song:

III. In the last verse, King Jesus exhorts all who are in the church to hope in God.

- Vs. 3: **O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forever.**
 - Israel, of course, was the name of the Old Testament church—now those who profess that Jesus Christ is Lord are the church in the New Testament.
 - He calls us to hope in the LORD from this time forth and forever.
- A. We can hope in God because our king, the Son of God who came in the flesh, has won the victory for us.
1. Now there is a man who has truly yielded to God.
 - a. No human had done that before Jesus came.
 - Adam should have done that, but he did not.
 - And since he did not, he brought sin upon the whole human race.
 - A right relationship with God our creator, as those who do His will, was broken by Adam and there was nothing we could do to make things right.
 - b. But Jesus came and He yielded to God in a most marvellous way.
 - Not only did He have to yield to Him as Adam was called to do, as one in paradise who was deprived of one of many trees to eat.
 - But He had to do it, as we have seen today, as one who, to do the will of God when it came to redeeming the church, had to be deprived of all the good things that God has made us human beings to enjoy.
 - He had to do that because He had rectify the wrong that we had done, by bearing God's curse for us, even though He Himself had no sin.
 - He had to associate with our shame and guilt and bear our iniquities.
 - And here, in this Psalm, He has testified to us that He fully resigned Himself to do this, acting against His own passions, that He might bear our sins on the cross.
 2. Now there is a kingdom of righteousness established by Him—a kingdom that is reconciled to God.
 - That is why Israel—the church—is here exhorted to hope in the LORD.

- There is full forgiveness and full restoration of the whole church through the suffering of Jesus who made His soul an offering for our sins,
 - who quieted His soul that He might give Himself up to the cross.
- B. By coming to Christ, we are ourselves also brought under God as willing servants.
1. By His grace, we are enabled to bear the cross after Him.
 - We do not bear it as He did—as those who are cut off from God like He was.
 - The cross we bear is one in which we bear the reproach of Christ in this world as our king who was crucified because we were so defiled and guilty.
 - We have to bear the world and the unbelieving church’s disdain for that.
 - Following Him as our Saviour means that there will be sacrifice.
 - It means that the world will not accept us or understand us.
 - It means that we will have to bear loss of relationships and respect for following Jesus—we will be persecuted and called evil for His sake.
 2. But we do not bear the cross alone.
 - We enter into the sufferings of Jesus, and He is constantly with us to help us and encourage us, His Spirit working in us and opening His word through fellowship and prayer and sacrament.
 - Like Him, we learn to calm and quiet our soul, knowing that we must bear this reproach for as long as we are in the world.
 - It builds our character and cultivates a greater love for our heavenly Father and for Jesus His Son... and also for each other.
 - And it strengthens our hope in the glory to come.
- C. Because of what Jesus did, we have suffering now, but hope in God forever.
1. We are restored to a relationship with God in which we shall be His forever, forever devoted to Him.
 2. And after this world is done, we will be able to have the full enjoyment of our restoration to Him—
 - with no more deprivation of the things He has created us to love and enjoy.
 - There will be fullness of blessing in union with Christ and with the Father and the Holy Spirit—forever.
 - Seeing in this Psalm what Jesus did gives us grounds to hope in the LORD from this time forth and forever.
 - We must be low for a while, but we will be exalted forever through Jesus Christ our Saviour who is already reigning at the Father’s right hand.