

January 24, 2016  
Sunday Evening Service  
Series: Psalms  
Community Baptist Church  
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Greer, SC 29650  
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## To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from Psalm 22.

1. Why have scholars throughout the ages considered this to be a psalm about Messiah?
2. When did God the Father ever forsake God the Son, and if He did, why did He do that?
3. How can the phrase, “I am a worm” apply to Christ?
4. Why should we continue to pray when it seems like God isn’t answering?
5. How can truths about eternity encourage us to trust God now?

### THE PSALM OF THE CROSS Psalm 22

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE DOE OF THE DAWN. A PSALM OF DAVID. We see in the opening line of the Psalm that it was to the attention of the Choirmaster. Fifty-five other psalms open with the same words, indicating that they are songs intended to be sung probably by choirs. At first glance, it appears that the writer intended for this psalm to be sung to a specific tune. That may or may not be the case. Actually, the titles of the Psalms are

often difficult to translate and, as a result, the titles become points of disagreement among translators.

The words, “The Doe of the Dawn” could be a specific tune to which these words were to be sung. Or it is possible that the title means something else. The Hebrew word for doe or hind is very much like the rare Hebrew word for help or deliverance. If the title of the psalm expressed the theme of “deliverance at the dawn,” that would fit very well with the first half of the psalm. If this was actually a psalm from David, as the title suggests, we can understand that there were times when he cried out to God for help and yet felt that God was no where near to deliver him. There were certainly times like that in David’s life, especially while he was escaping from Saul who wanted to kill him.

However, the words of this psalm descend to an abyss far deeper than David ever experienced and rise to a height far more sublime than he knew in this life. Christians who are familiar with their Bibles know at first reading of this psalm that it sounds a lot like the crucifixion of Christ. Indeed, many of the statements in this song are also found in the record of the Lord’s crucifixion. One scholar speculates that Jesus quoted this entire psalm while He suffered on the cross, but there is no evidence anywhere that such was the case.

It is also plain that the writer to the Hebrew Christians, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, revealed that this psalm is about Christ’s suffering. *For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise” (Hebrews 2:11-12; cf. Psalm 22:22).*

The words found in the first twenty-one verses describe a humiliating, gruesome death. The final section of the psalm contains words of comfort and assurance as praise to God for deliverance and look to God’s amazing blessings in the future age. Jesus’ agony on the cross won for us the prize of God’s eternal blessing. If Jesus had not completed the first part of the psalm, the second part of the psalm could never come to pass. Praise God that both parts of the psalm are certain.

**The Plea (vv.1-21).**

Help! The suffering Servant wondered, as we might wonder, “Where is God?” (vv.1-2). *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.* These are grievous words for someone who trusts God for help. David who trusted God to deliver him from the spear of the giant must have wondered why God allowed Saul to chase him. You, who were born again by faith at an early age have tried to serve God throughout life, might be caught in a trial where it seems that God is absent and uncaring. Are you so pressed down that you cry out by day and by night without God answering?

We are accustomed to pushing a few buttons on an ATM and receiving money, to throwing our lunch in the microwave and having a good, piping-hot meal in two minutes, or to logging on to You Tube to learn in one minute how to fix a problem on our washing machine that once would have taken hours to figure out. We expect the same quick response from God. The illustrations of the woman begging the stubborn judge for reprieve, and the neighbor petitioning his friend for bread are foreign to our experience in prayer.

Infinitely more grievous is this complaint from the lips of God the Son. He who is one with the Father, part of the triune Godhead. He who naturally shares in the majesty and glory of the Heavenly Father. He who knowing all things, therefore, knowing how He would agonize prayed, “*Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will*” (Mark 14:36). As he agonized, suspended between heaven and earth, weighed down with the sins of human history, *Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”* that is, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46).

Is God unfair, unjust, uncaring if He fails to respond to our pleas when we think He should? Was the Heavenly Father calloused toward His beloved Son’s agony? Such thoughts are impossible because God is holy (vv.3-11). He proved faithful to our fathers who trusted the Heavenly Father (vv.3-5). In every case through human history, God is beyond blame. The psalmist concluded that even though it seemed like God was absent, *Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel* (v.3). Because He is holy, God is altogether

separated from sin. The praise of His people truly assesses His perfection. How could this God do anything wrong?

Those who have gone before us have proven God’s faithfulness to His name and character. *In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them* (v.4). God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt even though their faith was very small. God delivered through some spectacular miracles. Even rebellious Israelites and pagan Gentiles retold the stories of God’s deliverance. When judges, kings, and prophets cried out to God, He delivered. *To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame* (v.5). But where was the holy, faithful God the Father while God the Son suffered on the cross?

Is it even possible that He would conclude with the psalmist in verse six, “I am a worm”? *But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people* (v.6). Yes, the fathers cried out to God and He delivered them. But the Son was more unworthy than the stubborn Israelites in the desert. He was more unworthy than fickle Israelites under the judges. He was more unworthy than faithless kings and their subjects. How could that possibly be?!

He was like a worm because He willingly took all the sin of the world on Himself while He hung on the cross. Isaiah promised of the Perfect Son, *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all* (Isaiah 53:4-6).

Furthermore, the suffering one would conclude, “I am mocked for trusting God.” *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!”* (vv.7-8). And so it was. Matthew wrote, *So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”* And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. Now

from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him” (Matthew 27:42-49).

What else can I do apart from trusting God (vv.9-11)? We must trust the Great Creator because all of life is under God’s control. The psalmist’s conclusion is spot on. *Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother’s breasts. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother’s womb you have been my God (vv.9-10).* In things as common as babies being born, God is responsible for safe delivery. Indeed, all circumstances should lead us to trust God as soon as possible. We are God’s possession from conception (yea, even for eternity).

Therefore, I cry to God. *Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help (v.11).* It is right for us to be quick to admit that trouble is near. Be quick to admit that we cannot solve the problem. Be quick to admit that there is none to help. Our perfect Savior came to this conclusion in all His humanity. He sympathizes with our weaknesses, because in every respect He has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

When we are honest about trouble, we might conclude with the psalmist, “Look at my plight!” (vv.12-21). He pictured the Savior surrounded by those who wish to destroy Him. *Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion (vv.12-13).* That is very much the picture Luke drew of the crowd milling around the cross, *And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” (Luke 23:35-37).* Mark gave us a similar description. *And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the*

*cross!” So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him (Mark 15:29-32).*

The scene of ugly, wicked people shooting verbal spears at Jesus was captured so well by C.S. Lewis in the “Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe” as he described the frenzy of the beasts and goblins at the stone table. It is the same picture still relived by zealous unbelievers who desires to quash every mention of Jesus whether it be manger scenes or copies of the Ten Commands.

See the Beloved Son mocked and slandered as He hung on the cross becoming physically wasted (vv.14-19). These words show us a body that succumbed to physical torture. *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 (vv.14-15).* Bones wrenched out of joint was a common result of hanging on the cross.

In the process, the Lord’s heart melted. John recorded that at the end of the ordeal, *One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water (John 19:34).* He who commanded the sea and storms, who cast out demons, was like a broken piece of pottery. And it was the loving Heavenly Father who caused this fearful condition. How do you respond to that kind of God?

It appeared that God the Father stood by and did nothing while the evildoers delighted to watch the destruction of their Lord. David foresaw the awful scene as *dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet – I can count all my bones – they stare and gloat over me (vv.16-17).* The piercing of Jesus’ feet was an undeniable part of the suffering. Thomas refused to believe unless he saw the nail prints (John 20:25). Jesus showed Thomas the scars (John 20:27). The dogs and evildoers pierced the hands and feet of our Savior and His body bears the marks for eternity.

The soldiers gambled for the Lord’s meager earthly possession. David said, *they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing*

*they cast lots (v.18).* It is possible that such a thing could have happened to someone like David. But the act was fulfilled specifically with Jesus. John captured the fulfillment for us. *When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things (John 19:23-24).*

What a horrible, gruesome picture Scripture has painted regarding the Beloved Son's suffering. But, still He prayed to the Father and trusted Him. We see here a prayer for deliverance. *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 (vv.19-21)!* Accompanying that request is the expression of confidence that God will respond. *Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen! (v.21).* As the lion was clamping down and the ox was goring, still the Lord had confidence.

This drives us to wonder when should we stop praying? We can stop praying about a matter when we are finally in heaven. Or it might be that the time will come when God answers the prayer with an obvious "yes" or "no." Or it is possible that God will clearly reveal to us that we should stop praying for something as when He told Paul not to pray about the thorn .

### **The Praise (vv.22-31).**

At verse twenty-two the tone of the Psalm changes (vv.22-25). Now we are challenged to praise the LORD (vv.22-23). Like our Savior, we should tell the congregation about Him. The psalmist concluded, *I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you (v.23):* The brothers of Christ crucified are all the redeemed for whom He died. How much humility does it take for the Creator, Savior, and Judge to be willing to be our brother?

We, the Church of Jesus, love to hear about the character and perfection of God (His name). Throughout His earthly ministry the Son recounted the Father's character. How much does the Son demonstrate the Father's glory now that He is glorified? We are reminded that *in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world (Hebrews 1:2).*

We also love to hear right appraisal of God. We are not keen on praising performers or applauding mere men and women who are sinners like ourselves. Why would we waste praise on humans when people who know stand in awe of the LORD? *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! (v.23).* To fear the LORD is to love Him. Now we must wonder, "Is this the crucified Savior admonishing us to fear the Eternal Father Who ultimately rescued Him and exalted Him forever?" If so, the Perfect One challenges us to acknowledge God's weight of value (the meaning of *glorify*). We are to stand in awe of God. Our lives must be characterized by fearing, glorifying, and standing in awe because these are all commands.

But, how can we fear, glorify, and stand in awe of God the Father who seemed to ignore the Son? Quite the contrary was the case. The Beloved Son concludes that the Lord's goodness is the reason for praise (vv.24-25). He is good because ultimately, the LORD delivers. *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 (v.24).*

Yes, it is true that the Father turned away from the Son while He bore our sins. But the empty tomb and the ascended Savior prove that He hears and answers prayer. God did not consider it contemptible when the Beloved Son cried for help. Nor does He despise us when we are afflicted. Nor is His face really hidden. It might seem as though God does not hear or does not care. In reality, God's silence is working the greater glory in our lives. God's silence increases our faith as we plead with Him. God's silence helps bring the dross to the surface so that we become less like weak, selfish humans and more like Him.

So then, cry to Him because God hears. Ultimately, the LORD gives us the reasons for praise. David wrote, *From you comes my*

*praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him (v.25).* The Son honors the Father through His obedience to His vows. He came to us in order to redeem us by His blood and carried out that vow through great suffering. He has set the example for us in this life as we look forward. So now, because He hears and answers with deliverance, we cry out to the Heavenly Father, trust His response, and praise Him for it.

It is good to trust God now, because great times are coming (vv.26-31). We will praise the LORD forever because He shall feed the afflicted. *The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied (v.26).* The Son taught us that affliction is not pleasant but is sometimes necessary. He has taught us that in the Father's wise plan affliction will cease. It is possible that a person could be afflicted for life. But faith keeps an eye on eternity where all affliction ceases and the afflicted are satisfied.

*Those who seek him shall praise the LORD! (v.26b).* People who have no faith, who do not trust God will blame Him and criticize Him in affliction. People who are becoming like Christ can praise God in all circumstances. And we certainly should praise Him once the affliction has ceased.

Most of all, we praise the LORD because we will live forever. That is idea behind, *May your hearts live forever! (v.26c).* It is the hope of every believer. This life is going to end either in affliction or pleasant prosperity. Our great hope is that we will live with God forever.

As we live with God forever, we will know in detail how the LORD rules (vv.27-31). He rules over all nations. David wrote that *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you (v.27).* This is promised regarding Jesus Christ who is the King of kings. Everyone will acknowledge this in the end. He must rule because He is King. *For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations (v.28).* Because He is King, He must rule over all nations in the future.

In this world as well as in that kingdom, those He prospers should worship Him. *All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive (v.29).* Often the very people who enjoy

God's material blessings are the least likely to worship Him. As a result, whole nations, as it were, will suffer condemnation for eternity as the Lord rules. The most famous and prosperous will be forced to bow before Him in humility. Far better to willingly bow in humility before Him now.

People who do that tell the glories of the LORD. *Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it (vv.30-31).* Blessed is the nation whose parents and grandparents pass on the story of God's glory. We must tell the good news that God is faithful to deliver. Tell the next generation that God deserves our praise.