

The Praise of Our Lord

Psalm 22:21-31

Studies in the Psalms #23

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WHEN we were on the island of Kauai, a tour guide told us the story of families that lived in tiny villages on the remotest part of the island for hundreds of years. They never left their village. Then in the 1960s they decided to take a walk. They ended up on the other side of the island. They had no idea there even was another side! Psalm 22 is little like that. We know the memorable words of our Lord's cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (v. 1) We know the words of those who "scorned," "despised," and "mock[ed]" him saying, "He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him" (vv. 6, 7, 8). We know the description of his crucifixion, "They have pierced my hands and feet...they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots" (vv. 16, 18).

But there is a whole other half. This pain of our Lord now gives way to the praise of our Lord. The darkness of Golgotha gives way to the light of the empty grave. The Father's not answering Jesus' pleas left him on the cross; now because of his answering he cannot leave him in the tomb. And as we see the crucifixion prophetically here we see the resurrection in verse 21: **You**

have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen! (v. 21b). In fact, he actually says **you have *answered* me**. It's the other side of verse 2 where he said, "O my God, I cry by day, but you do not *answer*."

In this part of the Psalm we hear *the praise of the Lord*, both his praise as our divine-human Mediator as well as his call to others to give God praise.

The Resurrected Jesus Leads Heavenly Praise (vv. 22, 25)

We first learn here that *the resurrected Jesus leads heavenly praise*.

Verses 22–26 alternate between individual praise in verse 22 and then corporate praise in verse 23. Verse 24 gives the reason to give praise. Then we go back to the alternation of individual praise in verse 25 and then corporate praise in verse 26. So in verses 22 and 25 we have the praise of the individual who has suffered so much in verses 1–21. Who is he?

Obviously I'm working from the assumption that this is Jesus. Besides the obvious way in which verse 1 and others are cited by Jesus and the Gospel writers as referring to Jesus on the cross, turn with me to Hebrews 2. In chapter 1 the writer says Jesus is greater and more glorious than angels. And now here in chapter 2 he quotes Psalm 8 to say all things are in subjection to Jesus. But in verse 8 the writer says what we're all thinking: "At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him," but instead "we see him who

for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death” (Heb. 2:9). Jesus is glorious as the eternal Son of God because “for [him] and by [him] all things exist” but the only way for him to “bring[...us] to glory” was “through suffering” (Heb. 2:10). Now notice this in verses 11–12: “For he who sanctifies [Jesus] and those who are sanctified [us] all have one source.” He’s speaking of our common humanity. “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.’” Sound familiar? He’s citing Psalm 22:22.

Jesus is in **the midst of the congregation** (*qahal*). And in that place he is **tell[ing] of the Lord’s name to** those he calls **my brothers**; in that place he says to the Father, **I will praise you**. Where is this **great congregation** (v. 25) that Jesus is in the **midst** of? Turn to Hebrews 12. Notice in verses 18–21 he says, “You have not come to [Mount Sinai].” In contrast, “you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant” (Heb. 12:22–24).

Our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is leading worship in the midst of the glorious and triumphant church in heaven! When you realize this, then our worship down here on earth will take on new and exciting dimensions!

The Resurrected Jesus Invites You to Praise (vv. 23, 26)

And that leads to a second point: *the resurrected Jesus invites you to praise*. How many of you actually thought about the Lord's Day yesterday? How many of you actually woke up today with joy and exuberance for what we are doing here? Or did you wake up to your Facebook page, to the calendar of summer events locally, and to all the things you need to do? And did you then think, "Oh, I have to go to church today. Let me try to get ready?" Go to church! Is that all you think you're doing here? Go to church! Is this just another obligation? Brothers and sisters, every Lord's Day of your life until you die and join that heavenly church choir or until Jesus comes again, he invites you to ascent the heavenly mountain, to enter the gates of the heavenly city, to take your place in **the midst of the congregation** alongside "innumerable angels" and "the assembly of the firstborn," and to hear your resurrected Jesus himself **tell of the Lord's name to** so that you may praise his name too! That's "church!"

Jesus is our worship leader who issues an invitation to worship: **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) He invites you! And notice the comforting and intimate image of verse 26: **The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever!** He's speaking to you who are **afflicted** with the words of the opening of the Psalm, who feel that God does not hear your cries, who feel that God is far away, and who feel that God will not or cannot help you. But you as such **afflicted** people **shall eat and be satisfied!** He's using imagery from the sacrificial laws in Leviticus here where you would bring an offering to the tabernacle, the priest would cut it up and offer part of it to the Lord on the altar, part of it he would eat, and then part of it he would give back to you to eat alongside the Lord in a covenant meal (e.g., Lev. 7:16).

So why does our resurrected Lord praise the Father and why are we invited to praise him as well? I asked you last Sunday as we meditated on the first part of this Psalm have you ever felt or actually been abandoned by someone you love? There's that scene in *The Return of the King* where the Steward of Gondor Denethor thinks his only son and heir is dead and then as he wanders to the precipice of his city to lookout at the overwhelming odds

facing him on the battlefield, he thinks his friends from Rohan have abandoned him. Then he loses it. But it wasn't true. Sure he felt abandoned in that moment, but help was on the way. Why does Jesus praise and why do we praise? The reason is in verse 24: **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.** Contrary to all you may feel like David and Jesus felt in the beginning of the Psalm, the Lord will never leave you or forsake you. So praise him!

The Resurrected Jesus Welcomes the World to Praise (vv. 27–31)

This invitation is to us as the people of God. But there's another group here that Jesus calls to worship: *the resurrected Jesus welcomes the world to praise*. If you are here today and have yet to give your life to Jesus Christ, I want to say to you that God made you for the purpose of sharing his life and love with you and so that you would respond in love by worshipping him. That's what it means to be human. But here we are in our sins, separated from true relationship with God. Jesus speaks to you now to give up your life and receive his!

Our ESV translation translates verse 27 as a statement of fact that the

world will worship, but it's best to see this verse as a call to the world to worship:¹ **Let all the ends of the earth [...] remember and turn to the LORD, and let all the families of the nations² [...] worship before you.**

No matter the *geographic* situation, the world is welcomed. While we lament the crumbling of our civilization at home, the mission research organization Operation World recently named Iran as having the fastest-growing evangelical church in the world! More Iranians have become Christians in the last twenty years than in the previous thirteen hundred years! In 1979 there were five hundred Christians in Iran. Today some say there are more than one million!³ **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.** No matter the *economic* situation, whether you are rich or whether you cannot preserve your life because of poverty—you are welcomed. And as verses 30–31 say, no matter the *chronological* situation, whether present or future, you are welcomed.

The question you no doubt are asking as one who has yet to trust in Jesus and unite yourself to the Christian church is “why?” “Why should I

¹ Davis, 158.

² This is the same word as Genesis 12:3.

³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-the-irans-church-in-two-sentences>

serve and praise the Lord with my life?” Verse 28 is the answer: **For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.** Jesus Christ is alive and because of that, he demonstrated to the world that he is the King of all the world; it’s his world for he made it; it’s his world for he’s in charge of it. Praise him! In 1833 a 10-year old boy, Archibald Hodge, and an 8-year old girl, Mary Hodge, gave a letter to James Eckard, a recent seminary graduate who was on his way to Sri Lanka as a missionary:

Dear Heathen: The Lord Jesus Christ hath promised that the time shall come when all the ends of the earth will be His kingdom. And God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. And if this was a promise made by a Being who cannot lie, why do you not help it to come sooner by reading the Bible, and attending to the words of your teachers, and loving God, and, renouncing your idols, take Christianity into your temples? And soon there will be not a Nation, no, not a space of ground as are as a footstep, that will want a missionary. My sister and myself have, by small self denials, procured two dollars which are enclosed in this letter to buy tracts and Bibles to teach you.⁴

This part of Psalm 22 has been unknown to us. May it never be again! In it our resurrected and glorified Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has all authority in heaven and earth, calls all men, women, and children to join him in giving glory to God the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit, because of what he himself has done. Let us pray...

⁴ David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: Faith and Learning 1812-1868*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 1:193.