

## Psalm 22 14<sup>th</sup> April 2019

### PRAY

- **Mark 15:34** Jesus said.... “My God, my God why have you forsaken me”.
- **Today** we look today at the cry from the cross (or one of them).
- It's a really important Q that takes us to the heart of Xty.
  - 1) As we approach **Good Friday**
  - 2) As we think about **suffering** – an “extra” to the series.
  - 3) As we take **communion**
- Crucial in every sense.
  - Was it a cry of **unbelief?** (how some interpret it)
    - After life of perfection and trust, now giving up on Father (thinking F given up on him?). “how can I trust you any more?”
  - Was it a cry of **anger?**
    - The Father has now abandoned him, and he is bitter at where he has ended up?
  - Was it a cry of **despair?**
    - All hope is now gone. In Jesus' humanity, he needs to be reassured by the thief on the cross that all is not lost. I heard that view recently.
- I find none of these explanations helpful. Because they imply that Jesus crossed the line from perfection to sin, (and he would now have to be suffering for his own sins)
- The best explanations of the Bible are found in the Bible. (Context always key).
  - **Psalm 22** explains it.
    - Jesus knew his Bible
    - He's quoting from it.
    - When we turn to whole Psalm we see what was in his mind on cross.
- Though written 1000 years before Jesus, this Psalm gives us an amazing window onto the cross.
- So let's look at Psalm 22 teaches us 3 things about the cross...

### 1) The perplexity of Jesus' sufferings. (confusingness of J's sufferings).

- For many the Cross doesn't make sense.
- Didn't to first people: When J first said it, people heard J words Aramaic thought Elijah.
- But even if understood what saying, at one level, can't understand what going through. Cos we have to see how surprisingly unfair it was.
- First we must start with King David- he went through some rough things in life- see 1 & 2 Samuel, like Saul baying for his blood, but never as bad as this. He often faced death, but never experienced it (this looks like execution scene)
- So in some way this Psalm speaks more than David experienced- it's prophetic, and points forward to Jesus- indeed 3 parts of this Psalm quoted in several places in NT.

- VI-II
- There just seem to be two things that don't mesh.
  - One is the faithfulness of God,
  - and the other is the abandonment which is being suffered.
  - It's like 2 things don't mix- don't seem to go together.
    - ▲ How can those both be true.
  - ONE: I am far from God v1. v11, v19, and
  - TWO: God shouldn't be far off- look v3 He is Holy. v4,5 He has rescued people in the past, v9 You are the One that made me, and who I have experienced as trustworthy all my life. Why now are you so distant.
  - This guy is trusting God, he's innocent.
  - ▲ That's why I've put the statue of "Lady Justice" on the screen.
  - There's a statue of her on the Old Bailey in London: Law Courts
  - She's blindfolded to represent impartiality
  - She has a scales to measure what people have done
  - And she has a sword to bring judgement swiftly.
  - But problem. This suffering is unjust. He doesn't deserve it.
  - V8. V10. Yet v1.
- Now we will come back to the reasons for the cross shortly.
- But at the very least, do we see from this Psalm that it's OK to ask WHY?
- In suffering series, saw Bible encourages honest pleading before God- Psalms full of it.
- And on a cross, a perfect man asked WHY?
- We are not the Son of God, but sometimes we experience perplexing feeling of abandonment from God, perhaps due to suffering we don't deserve.
- Well turn to this Psalm.
- Though there are answers, and purposes to his suffering, we see and feel and experience the perplexity of the cross. My God my god why have you forsaken me.
- And sometimes we experience that too.
- ▲ JC RYLE: *As it was with the great Head of the Church, so it may be in a modified sense with the members of his church. They too, though chosen and beloved, may sometimes feel God's face turned away from them. They too, sometimes from illness of body, sometimes from peculiar affliction, sometimes from carelessness of walk, sometimes from God's sovereign will to draw them nearer to Himself, may be constrained to cry "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?"*

- **2) The pain of Jesus' sufferings (mainly here look at v12-21)**

The Pain of the crucifixion is not emphasised explicitly in the NT for that is not the major focus.

Mark 15:24 just says "they crucified him". However, Psalm 22 does graphically explain some of the pain which this innocent sufferer was going through. And even though it was written 1000 years before Jesus was crucified it speaks with absolute clarity of the suffering of Jesus.

v6 to 8 outlines the **emotional pain**: the scorn and the shame. I don't think I can honestly say that I have ever been despised in life – not that I know of. It must be a horrendous. But that was people's attitude to Jesus. **v6**. And there was the mocking **v7**. Laughing as they walked past the criminals naked bleeding in degradation and shame. **v8**. The taunts- just like those aimed at Jesus from people who should have known better. *"Save yourself and come down from the cross. 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"* In **v18** they cast lots for his clothing. Can you imagine your enemies playing dice for your last few belongings- and incidentally this was perfectly fulfilled 1000 years later- something that wouldn't be easy for Jesus to stage if was a hoax- getting your enemies to play dice for your clothes. **The emotional pain.**

verses 12 to 21 outline the **physical pain**: And it is so horrific that it is likened to being ravaged by hungry wild animals intent on gorging their victim. The Romans used to let animals attack people in their amphitheatres, but I'm glad it's been stopped. Horrific. Yet that's what pictorially is happening here. **v12,13** v20 the dog, v21 the lion, the wild oxen. And there's the sticking out of all the bones- which of course would have happened when someone was hanging like a rag doll nailed to a plank of wood. There's the dehydration verse 15. And there's even a description of the hands and the feet being pierced v16. I wince at a tiny injection, I hate the smallest cut from a thornbush. Jesus had metal nails hammered through his hands and his feet.

But the **emotional** and the **physical** pain is nothing compared to the **spiritual** pain of being forsaken by God. **v1** . Jesus was abandoned by God. Forsaken by his Father. The word means to leave behind, to abandon, to leave in the lurch, to desert.

This is utterly indescribable. I guess that many of us here have experienced the pain of loss. A relationship severed through death. It is just so final, so painful, there is nothing that you can do to get it back.

▲ Ronnie Corbett wrote an autobiography of the two Ronnies shortly after Ronnie Barker died. Towards the end he wrote this: “I haven’t seen him now for the best part of a year, and I think that reality that I will never see him again is therefore beginning to have a stronger impact on me. I will hear some joke or watch some programme and think “I must see what Ron thinks of that” and then I realize that I can’t ask him”.

Death is so painful because it means separation from the ones that we love. But there was no relationship closer than that of the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son. At his baptism God said “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased”. But now that relationship was severed. Jesus was cut off from his Father. He was abandoned. It was as if a massive door slammed in Jesus’ face. He was abandoned by God.

On the cross Jesus experienced the most bitter pain imaginable- separation from God. Jesus suffered Hell. That is why there was darkness over the land (mark 15:33. God was punishing Sin- the death penalty of physical, emotional and worst of all spiritual death was was being faced by Jesus.

Well if we left it there we may have to say with the Andrew Lloyd Webber Musical “Jesus Christ Superstar” that it was all a tragic accident. A terrible waste, because Jesus had never sinned- of all the people in the world, he never should have been abandoned.

A perplexing abandonment, and a painful abandonment. But Psalm 22 tells us that in Jesus’ mind it was more: It was a **3) PURPOSEFUL ABANDONMENT**. And this is why we can call Good Friday **Good** Friday.

Look at verse 21 of Psalm 22. Alec Motyer says that even as the innocent victim is praying, his prayer is answered. He translates it literally from the Hebrew like this: “Save me from the lion’s mouth and from the oxen-horns...You have answered me!” At last the answer that he was looking for in verse 2.

It’s as if mid prayer, the God hears his prayer. And the remainder of the Psalm is a hymn of Praise to God that he has been heard. We don’t have time to look at the verses in detail, but can I point out one theme that runs through. The innocent victim has in mind his brothers and sisters as he is vindicated. **v22, 23, 25**. In fact the Psalmist looks out to the whole of the earth **v27,28. v29** there seems to be a universal banquet going on and verse **30** future generations are in mind.

It seems that as a result of this suffering, whole generations of people, from inside and outside Israel- the Jewish people will feast in the gathering of God’s people.

Well this is stunning. It is a window onto the mind of Christ as he was hanging dying on the cross under the wrath of God. Jesus had in mind his brothers as he hung there.

As Jesus quoted this Psalm, it perfectly fitted his situation. We could say that it fitted his situation even more accurately than it fitted David's: the suffering, the pain, the pierced hands and feet.

But the Psalm fitted Jesus not only in the perplexity and the pain but it fitted Jesus in the Purpose for his death. Jesus death wasn't a pointless waste of time, Jesus was bringing many sons to Glory.

Perhaps we can even say that as Jesus quoted Psalm 22, he was motivated by it to endure the cross, because he knew that the end of the Psalm finished up with the innocent and abandoned sufferer, being vindicated by God, and the whole earth and the whole of posterity being affected by his sacrifice.

That verse that we started the service with: The book of Hebrews says that Jesus for the joy set before him, endured the cross scorning its shame. Jesus was able to go through with the absolute agony of the cross, because it meant that his brothers would be with him in the feast, the gathering, the congregation of God.

Well this is extraordinary. Jesus death means that people from across the ends of the earth v27 can be included in the worshipping community of God.

You see when Jesus died, he was experiencing Hell not for his own sins, for he had none of his own- and that is why it is essential that he didn't lose faith in his Father at the last minute.

When Jesus died, God was punishing Jesus for our sins. Jesus is going through Hell, so that we don't have to go to Hell. Jesus is substituting for the sins of the world. And if my understanding of Psalm 22 is right (that it motivated Jesus to go through with the Cross), we can even go as far as to say that Jesus had us in mind when he was on the cross.

His death meant that we could join him at the feast- the feast of heaven. Jesus could have stepped down from the cross at any time. He is the King of the Universe. He can still a storm with a

word, and feed five thousand with one packed lunch. He could have avoided the cross if he wanted. But he didn't want to, because he wanted us to be with him in heaven.

Isn't that amazing?! Jesus death is not so perplexing. We see exactly why God turned his face away. We see why he let Jesus go through the agony of the painful abandonment. It was for us!

And if we are in any doubt, we only need to look back to Mark 15:38 where we see that the curtain of the temple, separating sinners from a Holy God was ripped in two from top to bottom.

The way back to God is now open.

▲ Case for Christ film. "But why would he do it- why would he allow himself to get killed, if he really is the Son of God... Why not use his power to defend himself". The answer to that is what got me out of the dirt (he was an archaeologist) and into the church. It's really very simple. Love.

I don't know what you have done this week. You may be pleased with the last week- perhaps there was a promotion or a wonderful family reunion- perhaps there were good things that you are proud of.

But if you are anything like me, there will have been sin: pride, lust, envy, hatred, pettiness, anger, selfishness, rebellion against the God of the universe. Our sin is not just a small thing. It is an offence to God, and it deserves Hell.

But God so loves us that he wants us to be in that congregation with Jesus, and so he placed our sin on Jesus' back. He was punished instead of us. The way back to God is open.

Jesus endured the cross, because he wanted us to be with him. There can be no greater love than this- to lay down your life for your friends. And it is what Jesus did for us. If we come to Jesus, if we come through his death to the Father, we will be in that great feast in Heaven, paid for by the King. What songs of praise we will praise God with. What songs of praise we will praise the son with. **Let's pray.**