

Mar 31, 2018

Psalm 22:1-31

Praying with God:
Praying with Christ

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I love **listening** to people pray because we all pray a little bit **differently**. I appreciate how people from a **Catholic** background or a more **formal** (aka. liturgical) church setting pray. Their words always seem so **reverent** and **thoughtful**. But I also like listening to people pray who just talk to Jesus like they're talking to a **friend**. Their prayers seem so **relational** and **honest**. I even like hearing people pray who are going through a **hard time**. There's something beautiful when you **pour** out your **heart** to God.

The Bible has a **whole book** full of different kinds of prayers, some reverent and formal, some relational and honest, and others for hard times. This book of prayer is called the Psalms. The Psalms are **poetry** the Israelite community **sang** and **prayed** together. God **inspired human authors**, King **David**, the **Sons of Korah**, and others, to write the Psalms to **help us** pray (this is why I call our series *Praying with God*).

- If you're feeling **thankful**, we have a Psalm for that. They're called Psalms of **Thanksgiving**.
- If you're feeling **sad**, we have a Psalm for that. They're called Psalms of **Lament**.
- If you just feel like **praising** God, we have a Psalm for that. They're called Psalms of **Praise**.

And it doesn't stop there. There are lots of **different** Psalms that can help us pray no matter our **situation** or **circumstance**. Today we're focusing on a very **special** type of Psalm, a **prophetic Psalm**. King David wrote it about the **Messiah**, a coming **hero** who was going to rescue the Israelite people from their sins.¹

This Psalm, **Psalm 22**, actually ties directly into **Easter**. This Psalm, which King David wrote about **1,000** years before the birth of Jesus, tells us about the **suffering**, **death**, and **resurrection** of Jesus Christ. **I believe** that as Jesus was dying on the cross, he was actually **meditating** on Psalm 22.

Jesus lived and prayed Psalm 22.

The Gospel of Matthew makes very **clear connections** between what Jesus was **seeing**, **experiencing**, and **saying** with Psalm 22. I want to look at **four fulfillments** between Matthew 27 and Psalm 22.

Matthew 27:35 When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. (NIV®)²

Psalm 22:18 They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

King David wrote much of Psalm 22 from the **point of view** of the **hero Messiah**. It's his perspective, so he's saying this about his own garments, and then it happens **exactly** as foretold to Jesus Christ. The **Roman soldiers** take and divide up his garments by lot. But it doesn't stop there.

Matthew 27:39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads

¹ Psalm 22 is the Isaiah 53 of the Psalms. It specifically foretells the Messiah's suffering, death, and resurrection.

² All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

Psalm 22:7 All who see me mock me;

they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

Lot's of people mocked Jesus as he hung on the cross. Those **passing by** insulted him. The **priests, teachers,** and **elders** mocked him (v41). Even one of the **criminals** hanging on the cross next to him insulted him. I think Jesus would have **recognized** Psalm 22 as he heard their **taunts**. They taunted...

Matthew 27:43 He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

Psalm 22:8 "He trusts in the Lord," they say,

"let the Lord rescue him.

Let him deliver him,

since he delights in him."

At the end of Matthew chapter 27 we come to the most **glaring similarity**, the one that **jumps** right off the **page** and that clearly tells us Jesus was **meditating** on this passage.

Matthew 27:46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,

so far from my cries of anguish?

Jesus **witnessed** what was happening, **knew** Psalm 22 **by heart**, and used his last moments to **fulfill** this prophecy completely. But he **didn't just** cry those words because he knew they were the **right answer**, he cried them because he **meant them**. Jesus usually called God his "**Father**," but here we find him calling him the more **formal "God."** This is because there has been a **break** in the **relationship**. The Father has **forsaken** and **abandoned** the Son. The Father has turned his love away from the Son. It's not that the Father **stopped** loving Jesus, but rather that the Father **denied** his Son the **experience** of that love.

Have any of you seen the **Still Face Experiment on Youtube**? It's a video of a **mother** and her **baby**. At first, she is very **expressive** and loving towards her baby. She speaks and makes loving **faces** at her **baby girl** and they **interact**, and the baby absolutely loves it. She is **engaged** and happy and **pointing** at things. But then **mom turns away** and comes back completely **blank faced**, and her baby doesn't know what to do with it. First she tries to get her mom's **attention**, and then he becomes **distressed**, then **cries** and get's upset. Now imagine Jesus who has known and experienced his Father's love for all eternity past, a perfect and ever present love. Now imagine that is gone. Jesus is **heartbroken**.

But the illustration **breaks down** because the father not only removed Jesus' **experience** of his love, he replaced it with an experience of his **wrath**, which is his **anger towards sin**. God is so good and perfect and just he must **punish** wrongdoing. God can either punish us for our sin, and so we experience the **wrath**, which is what **hell** is, or God can take our punishment upon himself. See at the cross, God **himself, in Jesus**, bore the punishment we deserve. And God takes **that love** that Jesus has known and experienced for all eternity, and **gives it** to all who **confess** their sin and puts their **faith** in Jesus Christ. God turned his face

away from his **Son** so that he could turn his face towards us. Jesus prays “**My God**, my God, why have you forsaken me?” so that you and I can pray “**My Father**, my Father, you love me!”

Have you ever read a **book** or article, and thought, “If I could just get my **friend** to read this, she would really love it.” We’re supposed to think of Jesus when we read Psalm 22.

Pray Psalm 22 with Jesus in mind. (v1-21)

Meditate on what Jesus experienced and prayed as you walk through your experiences and prayers. I want you to notice the **structure** of this Psalm. It jumps back and forth between the Messiah describing his experience, and then praying to God. It does this three times, starting with verses 1-2 (**situation**) and verses 3-5 (**prayer**).³ This is the first way we pray with Jesus in mind.

When you feel abandoned (v1-2), remember Christ’s presence (v3-5).

Sometimes we go through periods in life where we feel abandoned by the ones we love, our **friends** or **family**, or even by **God** himself. Maybe you’re **sick**, and wondering if God even exists. Maybe your spouse is **divorcing** you, and you feel so **unloved**. Maybe your kids are moving to **college** and you miss them. Maybe you’re going to college and feeling **homesick**. Maybe you’re spending time in the **Bible** and **prayer** but never feel like you **hear** from God. These are all ways we can feel abandoned. It’s at these **moments** that we remember Jesus is **still present** in our lives just like he chose to remember his **Father’s** presence.

Remember David wrote this Psalm from the **Messiah’s perspective**. What does the Messiah do? He purposefully **recalls** to mind that the Lord is **enthroned**, he is king, and he is **holy**. And then he remembers his **ancestors**, how his **family** before him trusted in God and God delivered them, like when God brought the Israelites out of **Egypt**, when God gave the Israelites **manna** in the desert, and when God delivered the nation from **foreign oppressors** time and time again during the rule of the **judges**. Even when Jesus is **forsaken** by his Father, he remembers his Father still **rules** and is still **good**.

Do you remember the first time your **parents** left you **alone** in your house? I remember a time when everyone left our house and I didn’t know where they were. It was **oddly quiet** and I wondered if I had missed the **rapture**. Then you start to feel **scared** and **worried**, and what do you do to combat that fear? You say, “I know my family loves me. They’ll be back. They’ve never abandoned any of my **brothers** (I think).” Even when our earthly family **isn’t reliable**, we have a heavenly family, a heavenly Father who will **never abandon** us because he already abandoned Christ on the cross and that was **enough**. God hasn’t left **generations** of Christians and he won’t leave us.

So when we **pray**, we can say, “Father, I feel like you’ve abandoned me, but I know it’s not true. You’ve never forsaken any of your **children** except for Christ Jesus on the cross; which you will never have to do again.” *When you feel abandoned, remember Christ’s presence.*

When others look down on your faith (v6-8), remember Christ’s faithfulness (v9-11).

We live in a culture where **people never judge** each other. Sometimes when others hear about our faith in Jesus, they will **judge us**. There are times we may lose **friendships** or **job promotions** because of Jesus. When this **happens**, remember Jesus was also **rejected**, but he kept his faith in his Father. When the Messiah was rejected, he prayed a prayer in the Psalm remembering God’s faithfulness to him **throughout** his life, “from my mother’s womb you have been my God” (v10b). When we are rejected by others, let’s **pray**,

³ Psalms Vol. 1: Psalms 1-41 (Expositional Commentary) by James Montgomery Boice. June 1, 1994. Psalm 22.

“Jesus, when others reject me because of **you**, help me remember your faithfulness till the very **end**.” *When others look down on your faith, remember Christ’s faithfulness.*

When you suffer (v12-18), remember Christ’s suffering and deliverance (v19-21).

When we go through **physical** or **spiritual** suffering, we can remember Christ’s suffering and deliverance. In verses 12-18, the Messianic Psalmist uses **metaphors** to describe his suffering.

- (v12) Strong **bulls of Bashan** surround me. These bulls were wild, untamed animals, known to attack and gore people. Christ was surrounded by a whole **company** of **soldiers** (Matt 27:27-31), maybe as many as **600**. They **mocked** him, **spit** on him, and **struck** him. When you go through **physical suffering** like **cancer** or **depression** or **migraines** or the **flu**, remember Christ suffered physically too.
- (v13) **Roaring lions** tear their prey. Lions are a vicious predator that can tear their prey apart. **Satan** is often pictured as a “roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus at the cross was also undergoing **spiritual suffering** as he bore the weight of our sins and the attacks of Satan. If you’re suffering spiritually, feeling overcome with **guilt** or like God doesn’t love you, Jesus can relate.
- (v15-16) Verses 15-16 tell us **specifically** that the Messiah **will die**, and **how** he will die. Verse 15b, “you lay me in the dust of death” and verse 16b “they pierce my hands and my feet.” King David wrote this Psalm when crucifixion wasn’t even invented yet. The **only way** Jesus can fulfill this is by **actually dying** on a **cross**, and that’s **exactly** what he does. Jesus dies.

But then the poem begins to **change its tone** in verse **19**. He begins to speak of **deliverance** and at the end of **verse 21** he says “save me from the horns of the wild oxen!” But the Hebrew word for “save” is in the **perfect tense**, which means it happened in the **past** with **continuing effects**. So it should really say, “You **have rescued** me” or “you **have heard** me”!

When Jesus cried out the **first verse** of Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you **forsaken** me?” he knew **verse 15** would come, his own **death**, but he **still believed** verse 18 would come, “You have **rescued** me!” Even in his suffering, Jesus was meditating on his **future deliverance**.

As we go through **trials**, we can pray and remember that Jesus **suffered**, but he was also **delivered**. If you **know Jesus**, you’ve been delivered from **sin** and **everlasting death**, and one day God will use your death to deliver you into **heaven** with Jesus. *When you suffer (v12-18), remember Christ’s suffering and deliverance (v19-21). Pray Psalm 22 with Jesus in mind. Why? Because...*

Jesus prayed Psalm 22 with us in mind. (v22-31)

When Jesus prayed Psalm 22:1 on the cross, **I believe** he knew the whole Psalm **by heart**. Although this Psalm prophesies the Messiah’s death in verses 15-16, it **prophesies** his **resurrection** (coming back to life) starting in **verses 22** through the end of the Psalm, “I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you.” This **resurrection hope** doesn’t stop with Jesus, it extends to **anyone anywhere** who will believe in Jesus. **You. Me.** People from all the earth and all the nations can receive eternal life (v27), including everyone sitting here today. Jesus **shouted** the last line of Psalm 22 right **before** he died.

John 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Psalm 22:31 They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:

He has done it!

When Jesus **said** “It is finished” he is **echoing** Psalm 22’s “He has done it!” God’s work of salvation through Jesus Christ is **complete**. Now any who **repent** of their sins and put their **faith** in Jesus Christ receive eternal life. Have you accepted Jesus’ **finished work** of salvation? Maybe you’re still trying to **earn** it or **add** to it; or you think Jesus needs your help. Do you think if I gave you a **paint brush** you could improve the **Mona Lisa** or make the **Sistine Chapel** more beautiful? On the cross, Jesus **painted** a **masterpiece** of salvation, and now he offers it to us as a gift. Will you receive it? *Jesus prayed Psalm 22 with us in mind.*

Jesus prayed Psalm 22 with us in mind. Pray Psalm 22 with him in mind.

In closing, I’d like to take a moment and put into practice what we’ve just learned. So I’ve asked someone from the congregation to come and pray the closing prayer for this sermon, praying back who we discover Jesus to be in Psalm 22. *Jesus prayed Psalm 22 with us in mind. Pray Psalm 22 with him in mind.*

Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote and preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church.

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