

Reflections for North Bridge Baptist Church

April 12, 2020

This week we will be reflecting on Psalm 22 together. Last Sunday we studied Psalm 118 and discovered some of the prophetic elements within several of the verses. This week we will see even more prophecy. This is one of the most quoted of all the Psalms.

I want to encourage you to read through the entire Psalm 22. If you are with family members take turns reading the verses. It would be helpful for your time of study to also read one of the gospel accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus. They can be found in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, or John 19. There are elements of this Psalm that will be found in each of the 4 gospels.

Easter Sunday: “Why God?”

Part I verses 1-5 “The Plea”

This Psalm begins with an agonizing and desperate plea from the writer, David. There were certainly times of desperation in his life. When we are in the midst of the struggle it will often feel like God is not there or has forsaken us. But, as we seek Him in the midst of these times, we learn that God is there and cares deeply for us. Also, we begin to understand what it means to walk by faith.

These are the same words that Jesus spoke from the cross. I believe that not only was Jesus making a desperate and agonizing plea to God, but was also quoting scripture in the process. It was customary for Jesus to quote scripture at significant times of his life. He quoted scripture during the time of his temptation in the wilderness. He quoted scripture often during the confrontations with the Pharisees. He quoted scripture while driving out the money changers from the temple. It is not surprising that Jesus chose these words from scripture.

This was a very personal plea. He identifies His father as ‘my God’. This was one that could not have been closer. It may be hard to understand that Jesus was both God and man. At this moment in time we see his truly human character. David felt like God had deserted him. In the case of Jesus, it was not only a feeling, but a reality. The Father had deserted the Son. It was that plan that God had put in place from the beginning of time. However, knowing this did not make it any easier for our savior. The Father and the Son did this for all of us. It is especially important for us to remember his agony for us on this Easter Sunday.

Part II verses 6-10 “Public Humiliation”

The agony that Jesus endured on the cross was extreme. By our standards in America today, it would be considered cruel and unusual. There are reasons that it is no longer used in any

society. However, in addition to the painful, slow death that occurred, it was also a public spectacle. The writer of the Psalm is very specific about this public humiliation. It is part of the uniqueness of this prophetic Psalm. Verse 6 talks about being 'despised by the people'. These are the same terms used by Isaiah, the prophet, when describing the coming Messiah.

"He was despised and rejected my men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not"
Isaiah 53:3

The New Testament story shadows many of the words used in this Psalm. The gospel of Matthew is especially clear in this understanding. (Matthew 27:39-43) The Psalm talks about the 'mocking' that takes place. There are insults and the shaking of heads. There is a mocking of the power that Jesus had to come down from the cross. No one has ever endured such humiliation publicly in all of history. Yet, in all of this, He had the power to come down. Jesus endured this for you and for me. It was the plan the Father had from the very beginning. The Romans who carried out the execution did not know what they were doing. It was God's plan for our salvation.

Part III verses 11-18 "Very Specific Prophecy"

This Psalm was written about 1000 years before the time of Christ. The Roman Empire did not even exist. There was no concept of crucifixion or many of the other means of punishment that were used by the Roman rulers. Yet, these verses include some very specific references to the crucifixion of Christ.

One common aspect of the crucifixion was thirstiness of the person on the cross. This is highlighted in verse 15 with the phrase: "and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth." John's gospel records Jesus words; "I thirst". He was given a sponge soaked in vinegar. John notes that this was a fulfillment of scripture.

There is a very clear referencing to the piercing of the hands and feet in verse 16. This is a specific act of crucifixion. This is referenced many times in the New Testament. If you remember, Thomas would not accept the resurrection of Jesus until he could touch his hands feet, and side. The basic garments of Jesus were ripped and divided. However, the outer robe was treasured, so they cast lots to see who would receive the spoils among the executioners. There is no doubt of the prophecy with these very specific references.

Part IV verses 19-31 "Praise in the Millennial Kingdom"

There is no reference of resurrection within this Psalm. However, there is a significant change of tone within the Psalm. Beginning especially in verse 21, the writer begins a section of praise

to God. Instead of the harsh and graphic descriptions in the previous section, there is now joy for the deliverance that God has provided. There is a great gathering of all people from around the world. There are references to a great feast so that all will be fed. There is no doubt that something miraculous has taken place.

We know that on the third day Christ arose from the dead. Every Sunday that we worship together is a celebration of that event. However, on this Easter Sunday it is even more of the focus of our worship. It is because of this event that we can have our relationship with God. He has made it possible through the death of His Son on the cross. None of us deserves this grace that he has provided through the death and resurrection of His Son. It is simply God's magnificent gift to us.

The last section then of this Psalm is prophecy, but in a different way. The resurrection has made all of this possible. It describes the future 1000 year reign of Christ. This is a time that the whole world will be called to come and worship. Verse 27 has this great promise that: "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him." We look forward to this day. However, our worship is now as we celebrate all that He has done on this Easter Sunday. I am reminded of the words from the book of Philippians:

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:8-11

So this Psalm that begins with the question 'Why have you forsaken me?', ends with a great time of praise. No matter how dark things seem, we are never forsaken because of His grace demonstrated through His Son. We have much to celebrate on this Easter Sunday.

Please continue to be in prayer for all of the family of North Bridge Baptist Church. We also pray for all of healthcare workers. This week I want to encourage you to reach out to any neighbors and friends that may need help. This could be in the form of sharing food, or running an errand, or simply sending them a note to let them know that you care. May God bless.