

Psalm 22 (Feb 28 2010)

Home Group

Have you bought your tickets for the Face 2 Face concert. Speaking to one vicar the response afterwards was If we'd known it was going to be that good we'd've come.

**Face2Face:** 6th March, 7 for 7.30, Village Hall. A musical evening with a medley of Jazz, Pop, Classical Ballard, Opera, Rock and Christian Music. Tickets £10 each to include light refreshments to be served during the intermission. "Light and refreshing pitchers of punch available to purchase" or bring your own tipple. Plus an opportunity to meet the band after the concert! Tickets available at: The Village Shop, Electrical Shop Or Contact: Janet Hughes 400157 or James Hollingsworth 400260. (A New Village Hall fundraiser

Worship: Psalm 22, it's a bit depressing perhaps so sing something praisey!

Welcome & Word:

1. Have you ever walked through a field of cows? What was it like?
2. Read Psalm 22
3. Have a couple of people read it through again looking for any hints or references to Good Friday.
4. Have another couple read through looking for where and when the pray-er asks God to do something.
5. Have another couple list all the emotions.
6. And another couple list all the facts – what's actually happening to him.
7. Are there any verses left out?
8. What do we learn about prayer from the answers to qns 4,5,6? OR What do we learn about prayer from this Psalm?
9. What do we learn about Jesus from this Psalm?
10. (vs22, 25) What kind of encouragement can you speak of to others in the Home Group / Congregation?
11. Why did I pick Luke 13.31-35 as the gospel reading. Does it shed any light on prayer and or Jesus' death?

Works: Pray and encourage each other: each should share one piece of encouragement and one prayer request. Another should take up that prayer and promise to pray for that person this week.

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**My God** my God why have you forsaken me – this is a strong and **angry Psalm**, full of pain and doubt. It is a uniquely powerful psalm and that makes it hard to preach on.

You see **if it was an ordinary** Psalm then I would use it to talk to you about prayer and **anger**. I would say things like: Its okay to get really angry at God.

Its okay in your prayers to **express all your emotions** to God. To shout and wave your fist and rave against God **and get really cross** and worked up. The Purpose Driven Life book says **Vent Upwards**.

We Christians **think that we're supposed never to doubt** God, never to feel this kind of pain and injustice. It seems some how wrong and **unbecoming for a Christian** to have to express this kind of anger – Oh God why have you left me, **abandoned** me?

We think that we're supposed to **feel constant joy** and happiness and peace and tranquillity and never stub a toe and never swear and never get cross. But that's a nonsense. If you can't be **honest with God in prayer**, then there's really no where left to go.

And we also feel that we **shouldn't waste God's time**. It is perhaps because we ourselves have so little time so that when we pray we're **concise in expressing** to God **exactly** what we would like Him to do.

I asked you last week to endeavour to **be answers to each others prayers** and 3 of you have been to me so thank you. This Psalmist takes forever to get round to saying what he wants God to do and it boils down to asking for **help**. Be near me, help me, deliver me, rescue me.

The majority of the Psalm is full of the **pray-er telling God what's going on and how it feels**. This prayer expresses the facts of the matter as well as the emotions.

This Psalmist is clearly going through a rotten time. Strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

There are times when we read stuff in the bible and **we just don't get it**. The great thing about the Psalms is that usually it doesn't matter, very often the line is repeated but in a different way. So we hear that **roaring lions open** their mouths against me, and if you're struggling with that we have Dogs surrounding me, a band of evil men have encircled me.

So even if you come across an obscure phrase just **skim over** it and most likely you'll find the same sentiment picked up in the next line.

If you've ever walked through a field of cows, or tried to **get past a cow when she's in the way**, then you'll have a slight sense of how intimidating they can seem. Of course if you're country-born and bred then it's not a problem for you but you can see how scary it is for others.

We **spend so little time in prayer** that we rarely take the time to **offload** onto God our emotions and to tell Him what we're feeling. And we rarely take the time to tell God what's going on.

Of course it seems **silly** to do so after all God is the Almighty **Omniscient** and all that, so God already knows what's troubling you but there is a lot of **healing** to be had in being given the chance to **express** yourself and to talk about what is happening in your life and what's going on and how that's effecting you.

I am of course presuming that **You women know intuitively** what I'm going on about. And if you found that patronising then you can express that in prayer later!

Perhaps it is us **Men** who need to know that this is a good thing to do. So for a moment let me express it in **management** speak – the way that we talk about a problem often defines the **kinds of solutions** that we're open to receiving. If we can just **listen to ourselves** and how we talk about some of our worries then it might be that we can find a way forward.

So you see **IF** this was a normal Psalm then I would preach about how we need to **spend longer in prayer** and that its okay for our prayers to be full of **just talking to God** about what's going on in your life, the **facts and the feelings**. Your prayer time does not have to be full of **what you want God** to do next.

IF this was a normal Psalm I would preach about how it is good to **vent your feelings towards God**. Be honest in your prayers. And that's not such a bad sermon.

If this was an ordinary Psalm I would talk about this last part of the Psalm where the Prayer seems to make a sort of **Promise** – Look God if you can get me through this then I will go to **Church and tell** people all about it. And that's a great idea. We need more stories of what God is doing in people's lives.

So **Facts and Feelings, Honest** to God and **Report** back to the Church.

The problem is that this is **Not an ordinary Psalm**. A really good preacher would try to tell you about the **historicity** of this Psalm. A Psalm of David, but David never went through **anything like this** in his life. This here is an **execution**.

It's a **mob led execution** where a good man who has loved God all his life – so that sounds a **bit like David but** this next bit isn't at all – he finds himself in such trouble that he is **mocked and beaten** and, one translation says they have **gouged** my hands and my feet.

[there's a textual problem with vs 16 where some Mss says Lion, not Pierced. This makes no sense at all. "Lion my hands and feet". Perhaps it helps to realise that these Mss are Jewish and after the Resurrection and perhaps they were adjusted by Jews so as to limit the textual excuse for persecution by Christians]

**Naked**, he hangs there for people to gloat at him. And as he dies he sees, so to speak, the **hangman earning** his pair of boots. But of course here there must be more than one involved in the crucifixion and so they must divide up the clothes and gamble for the robe.

This is nothing like anything that **David** experienced. It is something a little bit like what **Isaiah** saw when he prophesied about a Suffering Servant. (Isa53) This is a prophetic Psalm and that's why **it almost belittles it to use it to give advice**.

Jesus hangs on the cross and **this Psalm is enacted around him**. He has a moment of **utter desolation** – His heavenly Father has turned His back on Jesus, unable to face the weight of the sin –

as St Paul will later say: Gal 3.13 **Christ redeemed us** from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, [and then he quotes Deuteronomy saying] for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

And then in a marvelous moment akin to holding a **hymn book** in one hand ... he says <sup>2 c 5..21</sup> God **made him who had** no sin to be sin for us, so that in him **we might become the righteousness** of God.

Jesus hands and feet are **pierced** and he hangs on the cross and hears the **mockers** and they tease him with this **silly thing** that we mature Christians believe even though we know it doesn't work like this – He trusts in the Lord, **let the Lord rescue him**.

**As if God is there for our convenience.** Its not so far from the Devil last week saying to Jesus – **IF** you are the son of God, then **turn** these stones into bread. Its not so far from the **Maundy Thursday** when Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane – **not my will but your will**. Jesus knows that God is not there for our convenience

but rather that **we have been made for Him** and as we live our lives in Him, so we are complete and **whole**.

The Psalm ends with **hope**. Hope that this suffering has not gone **unnoticed by heaven**, hope that God will take a hold of this suffering and do something good with it.

And the hope **points further than the Israelites** being saved through this, it points to **all nations**. To the poor and the rich, the healthy and those at **death's door**, this is all very good news.

Its not a good news that **depends on how clever** you are, how **happy** you currently are or how **unhappy** you are. This is goodnews to those **who stood there** and saw this awful thing happening and it is goodnews for those of us who **were not born at the time**.

And it is goodnews because if any thing good can come out of this awful day it will **be because God has done it**. And that's how this Psalm finishes – **he has done it**.

And it is the last word from the cross – **It is finished**. Jesus, on the cross has done it. 'God **made him who had** no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'

So you can see why I find it a **little twee to preach a How to pray** sermon off this Psalm – yes it encourages us to be open and **honest** to God, to talk to God about the **facts** and the **feelings** and not just to bang on about what we want God to do but in giving **vent** to what's going on, we are heard and being heard **brings some healing** in itself. And that's good.

But there's so much more here. A prophetic Psalm that speaks of what happened on **Good Friday**, the detail is all here, from the **agony** through to the hope.

For through this death we are **made friends** with God, we have **peace** with God, this is why Paul will say **Death where is your sting?** Grave where is your victory?

Now we are **justified** with God and **reconciled** and it doesn't matter if you follow all that jargon, all you need to grasp is that this is **Good for you**. And it has worked because **God has done it**. As Jesus said: **It is finished**. Amen.