

*Restoring Your Soul Through Psalms*  
***I Will Tell of Your Name***  
*Psalm 22: 22-31*

**First Presbyterian Church  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

**September 20, 2020  
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My godparents lived 2 doors down from us. Their youngest son Danny was my best pal and frequent torturer that I have told you stories about. My godfather Jim, had, like most of our dads, served in WW2. He'd been in the Pacific as a PT boat captain. His very first night out in one of these speedy torpedo ships, they came under heavy fire. Combat on foreign seas was very different from a farm in southern Georgia. In the dawn light as they returned to shore, my godfather took off the life preserver he had worn. There was bullet hole into the front of the life preserver. He turned it over. There was a bullet hole coming out the back of the life preserver. Right at heart level. The life preservers were secured snugly around the body. His hadn't come loose. Godfather Jim didn't have a scratch on him. That's impossible. How can a bullet go in one side and come out the other without touching the body in between? Jim knew he had a choice. Call it blind luck. Or call it a miraculous deliverance. Try to explain it. Or just give thanks to the God who saved him for a reason. When Jim got home, he spent decades as a faithful Presbyterian elder and Sunday school leader, and even as a constant cheer leader for his little godson who would grow up to one day conduct his memorial service.

We all have stories of deliverance. We all have had to choose whether to recall them as blind luck, fate, fortuitous accident, or the hand of a gracious God. Six inches closer to the driver's door and you would have been crushed. A matter of milliseconds in reaction time. Quick reflexes or the hand of God? You look at the empty pill bottles. The doctor said if she'd taken what she said she took, it would have been medically impossible for her still to be with us. But she is. Miscount? Or the deliverance of a merciful Savior? There's simply not time to finish what's left on this project. It's not humanly possible. You're going to fail. But somehow it gets finished. An adrenalin rush of efficiency? Or the work of a God who can bend time?

For David, there was no hesitancy. Last week we studied the first half of Psalm 22. We saw the back and forth struggle in prayer between crying out in despair and clinging to confidence in God. We saw him reach the conclusion that he was to be laid in the dust of death. His situation was hopeless and all he could do was cry out: “*Save me from the mouth of the lion!*”

The whole psalm turns in the middle of the verse. No explanation is given. It’s all so understated: The next words are: “*You have saved me from the horns of the wild oxen!*” It was over. Then you rescued me. I was going down. You lifted me up.



How different Scripture is from a Marvel superhero movie. If this had been Spiderman in such a dire predicament, half of New York would have been destroyed in the battle for his deliverance, and it would have taken 20 minutes of screen time and \$50 million in special effects. In Psalm 22 we just go from “Save me” to “You

rescued me.”

But the importance is no less significant. David did not question the source of his rescue. Immediately he sings,  
I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.

He wants to testify. Freed from attack and certain death, he wants to go to the house of the LORD and declare the excellencies of God in front of the assembled crowd.

His words are so joyfully poignant:

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.

David recognizes a dirty little secret about us. We find afflictions to be gross. Needy people can disgust us. In these Covid days, don’t dare sneeze in a public place. You will be shunned. If you’ve ever been fired, you know the weird feeling that it seems like people everywhere know about it. The cashier at Whole Food’s is not really sure you should be shopping there. The bank teller you’ve known for

months checks your i.d. twice. It's like you have a smell about you. If you've ever been dumped by someone, it seems to be written on your face. They get your order wrong at Rocca's. They lose your appointment at the doctor's. When we're crying ugly tears of loss, people don't want to hug us because we're all hot and reeking of sadness. We can smell like our sickness or the sweat of our stress. Even our dogs know something is wrong. Affliction can make us repellent to others. And worst of all, we can think we deserve it. We can think God views our suffering as a moral failure. It's a sign of his judgment.

But David has discovered that's a lie. God has not despised the affliction of the afflicted. He thought God had forsaken him. God had not. He thought God turned his face away from his prayers. God did not. He heard. He delivered.



How profoundly this is true with Jesus. Can you imagine the conversation that might have occurred between the angelic beings if they had heard about the Triune God's plans to save us? Gabriel is shocked. "You're going to do what? Become one of them? You have unlimited freedom and you're going to climb inside a tiny, hot human womb? You burn with holiness and you're going to inhabit their stinking sinful flesh?" What kind of self-respecting God would ever take up residence as worm-meat? But he despised not the affliction of the afflicted. A lost verse of the Christmas carol "O Come All Ye Faithful" declares, "Lo, he abhorred not the Virgin's womb!" The Son of God did not turn aside from the confines of our human bodies. Nor from mingling with our sinful, broken, afflicted lives. He did not despise us in our sin and suffering.

Now, we know Jesus quoted the first part of Psalm 22 on the cross. But less well known is how the New Testament places this second part of Psalm 22 on the lips of Jesus. Let's take a moment to look again at Hebrews 2, which we used for our call to worship.

Both Jesus who makes people holy, and we who are made holy, are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters!

The original literally says that both Jesus and us are "all of one." Since the Son of God became a man, we're all now cut from the same cloth. We're peas in the same pod. God crossed the gap so he could connect with us skin to skin, voice to voice to voice and eyeball to eyeball. And he is not ashamed to be kin to us! As our

psalm said, he does not despise our affliction. He is proud to say, “I am one of them now.”

Hebrews goes on to tell us why Jesus created this connection:

Since the children have flesh and blood, Jesus too shared in our humanity. For this reason, Jesus had to be made like us, fully human in every way, in order that he might become our merciful and faithful high priest, making atonement for our sins.

Jesus shared our humanity so he could live a life of perfect love, faith and obedience as one of us and on behalf of all of us. He did it for us. Jesus’ faithfulness included offering his life for us on the cross. He went to the place of forsakenness so we could be brought to the place of welcome and inclusion in the love of God. As the perfect man, he could offer himself without stain of sin or blemish of disobedience. He was the priest who could offer the sacrifice that takes away sin: himself!

This offering of himself for us as one of us has enormous consequences. Hebrews tells us that Jesus “tasted death for everyone.”

So that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

He took our death as his own so that he could give us his eternal life. And now he has freed us from fear of death. He has freed us from fear of eternal separation from God. Satan’s power has always been that of accusation and half-truth. He told our first parents. “God doesn’t want you to be like him. You won’t really die.” He tells us now, “There’s nothing more than this, so just do what you want. God doesn’t really care for you anyway. He only wants to judge you and restrict you. Just live for now. Take what you want.” Under the lie, we fear death as our final end. We hate God for making us the only creatures on earth aware that we will die. But in entering death for us and coming out the other side, Jesus has broken the spell. We now hear the truth “Because I live, you also will live...I go to prepare place for you.” God is not out to get you. He’s out to save you. He doesn’t want to restrict your life; he wants to free you for everlasting life that starts now.

So here’s the connection. Hebrews puts the words of Psalm 22 on the lips of Jesus. Jesus was seemingly forsaken unto death on the cross. After all, he did die.

He was buried. It seemed over. But then the deliverance David experienced in Psalm 22 became a description of the resurrection of Jesus. You rescued me! Imagine Jesus in the tomb on Easter Sunday. Before the stone rolled away. He wakes up alive. No more pain. Life surges through his transformed body. Last he remembered he had prayed “Why have you forsaken me?” Now he finishes the psalm, “You have rescued me. I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters.” He can’t wait to get out of the tomb and go tell them the news. “My Father has raised me. We won! Life wins!”

This is where Hebrews quotes Psalm 22, “Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying,

I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.” And again he prays, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

So he goes and shows himself to his disciples. He declares the great deliverance of his Father. And more. All his disciples have a share in Jesus’ dying and rising. In John’s gospel, we hear the resurrected Jesus say to Mary Magdalene, “Go and tell my brothers that I ascend to my Father and *your* Father, to my God and *your* God” (John 20: 17). All I have with my Father is now yours. Where I am going, you will go. Nothing can separate us now.

In fact, this verse from Psalm 22 is still an ongoing reality. Whenever we gather in Jesus’ name, he is in our midst. That’s not just a pious, soupy feeling. That’s a mystical reality. Every time we gather for worship and lift our voices to sing praise to God for his great salvation, we can be sure that Jesus is right there with us. His voice is leading our singing. He leads our worship with the joy of being the one who was crucified and resurrected.

And he presents us to his Father. Here I am and the children you have given me. As someone once said, it’s like Jesus arrives in heaven and says, “Dad, I’m home! And I brought a few billion friends for dinner!” He presents us in himself to the Father. “Here are my brothers and sisters! I have become one of them. I died for them. I rose for them. And I offer them to you as ransomed, freed, restored and forgiven.”

We are part of an extraordinary reality. It’s a deliverance even more miraculous than my godfather Jim getting shot straight through his body yet without a scratch. In fact, just our being here today is a fulfillment of the promise

in Psalm 22. David wraps up his song, the song Jesus sang as his own, with these words,

It shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;  
they shall come and proclaim his righteousness  
to a people yet unborn,  
That he has done it!

He has done it. It is finished. A mighty deliverance. And two thousand years later we bear witness. We were the people yet unborn and now we live and proclaim that Jesus died and rose to save us. Each one of us has a deliverance story. And we will take our turn. We will pass it along to the next generation. He has done it. It is finished. Jesus is risen and we have been raised to life with him!