

# *Hope in the Dark*

Psalm 22

Mark 15:21-37

Sermon

*Hobart, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

*Devonport, March 24<sup>h</sup>, 2012*

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**Psalm 22:1-8, 14-21 NLT** *A psalm of David*

- <sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?  
Why are you so far away when I groan for help?
- <sup>2</sup> Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.  
Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief.
- <sup>3</sup> Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- <sup>4</sup> Our ancestors trusted in you, and you rescued them.
- <sup>5</sup> They cried out to you and were saved.  
They trusted in you and were never disgraced.
- <sup>6</sup> But I am a worm and not a man.  
I am scorned and despised by all!
- <sup>7</sup> Everyone who sees me mocks me.  
They sneer and shake their heads, saying,
- <sup>8</sup> “Is this the one who relies on the LORD?  
Then let the LORD save him!  
If the LORD loves him so much, let the LORD rescue him!”
- v 14** My life is poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.  
My heart is like wax, melting within me.
- <sup>15</sup> My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.  
My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.  
You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.
- <sup>16</sup> My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;  
an evil gang closes in on me.  
They have pierced my hands and feet.
- <sup>17</sup> I can count all my bones.  
My enemies stare at me and gloat.
- <sup>18</sup> They divide my garments among themselves  
and throw dice for my clothing.
- <sup>19</sup> O LORD, do not stay far away!  
You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!
- <sup>20</sup> Save me from the sword;  
spare my precious life from these dogs.
- <sup>21</sup> Snatch me from the lion’s jaws  
and from the horns of these wild oxen.

## **GOSPEL READING**

### **Mark 15:21-37**

#### *The Crucifixion*

<sup>21</sup> A passerby named Simon, who was from Cyrene,<sup>\*</sup> was coming in from the countryside just then, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. (Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.)<sup>22</sup> And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means "Place of the Skull").<sup>23</sup> They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it.

<sup>24</sup> Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice<sup>\*</sup> to decide who would get each piece.<sup>25</sup> It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.<sup>26</sup> A sign was fastened to the cross, announcing the charge against him. It read, "The King of the Jews."<sup>27</sup> Two revolutionaries<sup>\*</sup> were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Ha! Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days."<sup>30</sup> Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!"

<sup>31</sup> The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself!"<sup>32</sup> Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!" Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

#### *The Death of Jesus*

<sup>33</sup> At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock.<sup>34</sup> Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah.<sup>36</sup> One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. "Wait!" he said. "Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down!"

<sup>37</sup> Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last.<sup>38</sup> And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

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<sup>\*</sup> *Cyrene* was a city in northern Africa.

<sup>\*</sup> Greek *cast lots*. See Ps 22:18.

<sup>\*</sup> Or *Two criminals*.

<sup>\*</sup> Some manuscripts add verse 28, *And the Scripture was fulfilled that said, "He was counted among those who were rebels."* See Isa 53:12; also compare Luke 22:37.

<sup>\*</sup> Ps 22:1.

## INTRODUCTION:

### I. THERE IS A SAYING

#### A. “THE DARKEST HOUR IS JUST BEFORE DAWN”

#### B. LIFE CAN OFTEN GET GREY, GLOOMY AND OFTEN VERY BLACK

1. It can seem as though things are getting worse, and not better
2. We can become despondent and feeling hopeless, as if things just aren't going to get better

#### C. THE SITUATION FOR MANY PEOPLE IN OUR WORLD IS LIKE THIS EVERY DAY

1. Many young people, tragically, can't see anything good ahead in their lives
2. People in refugee camps in Africa, people in Sudan, Afghanistan and Pakistan can't see any hope for their nations ever becoming peaceful and safe
3. People in the Torres' Strait aren't just worrying about family problems or a shortage of money or employment
  - a) They are worried about their whole islands disappearing under the rising ocean levels

#### D. DURING WWII THE FAITH OF MANY, ESPECIALLY JEWS, WAS SEVERELY TRIED

1. Many gave up their faith in God, but others faith grew
2. According to a survey of 1,000 survivors of the Holocaust,

eleven percent said they had rejected all belief in the existence of God as a direct result of their experience... ..their professed atheism seemed less a matter of theological belief and more an emotional reaction, an expression of deep hurt and anger against God for abandoning them.<sup>3</sup>

3. But the survey revealed that many found a deeper faith that clung to God, but included crying out to him with feelings of doubt and abandonment, just as David did in many of his psalms

4. Corrie Ten Boom was one of the survivors of the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbruck.

a) In Ravensbruck, Corrie suffered being whipped, and watched her sister and so many others go to their deaths.

b) She wrote of her experience:

It grew harder and harder...there was too much misery, too much seemingly pointless suffering. Every day something else failed to make sense, something else grew too heavy.

But as the rest of the world grew stranger, one thing became increasingly clear. And that was the reason the two of us were here. Why others should suffer we were not shown. As for us, from morning until lights-out, whenever we were not in ranks for roll-call, our Bible was the center of an ever-widening circle of help and hope. Like waifs clustered around a blazing fire, we gathered about it, holding out our hearts to its warmth and light. The blacker the night around us grew, the brighter and truer and more beautiful burned the word of God. . . .

Life in Ravensbruck took place on two separate levels, mutually impossible. One, the observable, external life, grew every day more horrible.

The other, the life we lived with God, grew daily better, truth upon truth, glory upon glory.

c) She concluded, that;

However deep the pit, God's love is deeper still.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Boom, Corrie Ten. *The Hiding Place* (Spire Books). Grand Rapids: Workman, 1974, 194-195.

## S.P.S:

### **A. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO BE LOOKING AT THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING AND HOPELESSNESS,**

1. times when life seems overwhelmingly dark and lonely, when there doesn't seem to be any help or hope available
2. When even when we cry out to God, the trial continues

### **B. PRAYER**

## BODY:

### II. OT PEOPLE OF FAITH

#### **A. THE OLD TESTAMENT IS FULL OF STORIES OF GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH VARIOUS PEOPLE**

1. In just about every case they went through big ups and downs in their lives
2. Abel's life ended prematurely
3. Noah lived in terrible evil times, then had to go through the flood and other problems later on
4. Abraham and Sarah were promised a son, a land, and many descendants, but they had to wait a long time, and went through all sorts of problems along the way
  - a) And even then, didn't get to possess all that they hoped for
5. Moses' story is similar, and he didn't end up entering the Promised land
6. David's story has many ups and downs

#### **B. HEBREWS 11: GIVES US A HUGE, YET STILL INCOMPLETE LIST OF SUCH PEOPLE**

1. Who trusted in God, looked to him for help, yet did not receive what they were hoping for in their lifetimes

**C. THE WHOLE STORY OF ISRAEL IS FULL OF HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS**

1. David and others who wrote the Psalms express these troubles clearly and boldly

**D. LET'S LOOK AT ONE OF DAVID'S PSALMS**

**III. PSALM 22**

22 *For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Doe of the Dawn."*

<sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?  
Why are you so far away when I groan for help?

**A. THIS IS THE PRAYER OF THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART, WHO WAS KING OF ISRAEL**

1. He gets right to his main complaint!
  - a) He clearly felt abandoned, alone
  - b) He felt that his cries for help were not being heard or responded to

<sup>2</sup> Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.  
Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief.

2. Sometimes people make the insensitive, hurtful and judgmental comment, oh, if you would pray more fervently, and with more faith, or use certain words, God would hear you.
  - a) There are many books, articles and videos promising ways of getting God to hear and bless us
  - b) Like Job's friends, often we, or others, tell us that we must be doing something wrong if God is allowing us to continue to suffer
3. Too often we accept the maxim, that if we do right, God will do what we ask

a) But if we do wrong, he will abandon us to our fate

4. This is closer to paganism than Christianity

a) This is where people believed that the gods were obligated to respond to what people did in a sympathetic, or imitative manner

**B. IT IS CALLED SYMPATHETIC MAGIC**

1. You do something on earth for the god, and the god is obligated to reciprocate in kind

2. Voodoo dolls supposedly work on a similar line

a) You do something to the doll that is similar to a particular person, and similar things happen to the person

b) i.e. break the leg of the doll, and they will suffer a broken leg

**C. SO WE AND DAVID ASK; HOW COME YOU AREN'T HEARING MY CRIES AND RESCUING ME?**

1. God's fairness and justice is being questioned!

a) The insinuation is that God has to do what we ask because of what we have done

b) It is putting us in the driver's seat, and making God into our servant

2. But God is holy, he is the King

a) We are to listen to him, and serve him, not use him or expect him to conform to our will and wishes

<sup>3</sup> Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> Our ancestors trusted in you,  
and you rescued them.

<sup>5</sup> They cried out to you and were saved.  
They trusted in you and were never disgraced.

3. God has a record of being there for his helpless people

a) Of not letting them down



<sup>6</sup> But I am a worm and not a man.  
I am scorned and despised by all!

#### 4. I have done the right thing and I yet I am being disgraced

<sup>7</sup> Everyone who sees me mocks me.  
They sneer and shake their heads, saying,  
<sup>8</sup> “Is this the one who relies on the LORD?  
Then let the LORD save him!  
If the LORD loves him so much,  
let the LORD rescue him!”

#### **D. NOW HE HAS SWITCHED ANGLES IN HIS ARGUMENT**

1. Now he is saying, not only am I being disgraced, but you are as well, God.

a) People are saying you aren't reliable because you haven't saved me!

<sup>9</sup> Yet you brought me safely from my mother's womb  
and led me to trust you at my mother's breast.  
<sup>10</sup> I was thrust into your arms at my birth.  
You have been my God from the moment I was born.

#### **E. WHAT IS DAVID SAYING HERE?**

1. Hey, we have been in a close relationship since my birth

a) How can you suddenly let me down, and abandon me now!

<sup>11</sup> Do not stay so far from me, for trouble is near,  
and no one else can help me.

b) I can't save myself, and my enemies are everywhere, and overwhelming

<sup>12</sup> My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls;  
fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!

<sup>13</sup> Like lions they open their jaws against me,  
roaring and tearing into their prey.

<sup>14</sup> My life is poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.

My heart is like wax,  
melting within me.

2. This is such a powerful picture of how we humans feel  
in times of suffering

a) We feel totally helpless, and as if we are dissolving under  
the pressure, falling apart

<sup>15</sup> My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.  
My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.  
You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.

## **F. DAVID IS SAYING HE FEELS ABANDONED**

1. Dropped on the road and left for dead, lying helpless in  
the dust

<sup>16</sup> My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;  
an evil gang closes in on me.  
They have pierced my hands and feet.

2. Like in the movies, he is lying there being bashed and  
battered by the evil gang that hovers all around him

<sup>17</sup> I can count all my bones.  
My enemies stare at me and gloat.

3. They swear and curse and taunt him

<sup>18</sup> They divide my garments among themselves  
and throw dice\* for my clothing.

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\* Hebrew *cast lots*.

4. They strip him of all that is valuable, all his personal possessions, as if he is dead

a) He clearly feels totally defeated, humiliated and robbed of everything, including his dignity and hope of life

5. So again, he cries out to God

19 O LORD, do not stay far away!  
You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!

6. Clearly, though he is upset that God hasn't yet rescued him, he still cries out to him, he is still looking to God

20 Save me from the sword;  
spare my precious life from these dogs.

21 Snatch me from the lion's jaws  
and from the horns of these wild oxen.

22 I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.\*  
I will praise you among your assembled people.

23 Praise the LORD, all you who fear him!  
Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!  
Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

24 For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.  
He has not turned his back on them,  
but has listened to their cries for help.

25 I will praise you in the great assembly.  
I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you.

26 The poor will eat and be satisfied.  
All who seek the LORD will praise him.  
Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

27 The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him.  
All the families of the nations will bow down before him.

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\* Hebrew *my brothers*.

<sup>28</sup> For royal power belongs to the LORD.

He rules all the nations.

<sup>29</sup> Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.

Bow before him, all who are mortal,

all whose lives will end as dust.

<sup>30</sup> Our children will also serve him.

Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord.

<sup>31</sup> His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.

They will hear about everything he has done.

**G. SO WHAT IS THE ANSWER TO DAVID'S DILEMNA HERE?**

1. What has he concluded?
2. Is he rescued?

**H. WHAT THEN IS THE POINT?**

1. It is a hard, but very real answer...
2. Keep on trusting and looking to God even when all hope seems gone, and even, and especially, when we think God has abandoned us

**I. DAVID DESPAIRED**

1. He didn't understand why God didn't intervene, but he never gave up crying out to God, and depending on him to be who he had proven himself to be over and over again
2. David maintains his faith that in the end, God will not let him down, all will be set right

**J. INTERESTING THAT THE FOLLOWING PSALM IS**

1. Psalm 23, The Lord is My Shepherd

<sup>4</sup> Even when I walk

through the darkest valley, [the dark valley of death]\*

I will not be afraid,

for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

2. As we are going to see in Mark 15, Jesus is the only answer to the dark valleys of life and our world

a) He has been there, and is always with us in and through them

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## IV. MARK 15

### A. JESUS HAS BEEN BETRAYED BY A CLOSE FRIEND

1. Abandoned by his other friends
2. Taken and falsely convicted of blasphemy and sedition by his enemies
3. Humiliated and beaten
4. And is being forced to carry his own implement of execution to his death

### Mark 15:21-37

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<sup>24</sup> Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice\* to decide who would get each piece.

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\* Or the dark valley of death.

\* Cyrene was a city in northern Africa.

\* Greek *cast lots*. See Ps 22:18.

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### *The Death of Jesus*

<sup>33</sup> At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. <sup>34</sup> Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"\*

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<sup>37</sup> Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

## **B. THIS IS AN ASTOUNDING REFLECTION OF PSALM 22**

### **1. Not only Psalm 22:1**

"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"\*

## **C. WE SEE VERY MUCH THE SAME THING HAPPENING TO JESUS AS DAVID TALKED ABOUT**

<sup>16</sup> My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;  
an evil gang closes in on me.  
They have pierced my hands and feet.

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\* Or *Two criminals*.

\* Some manuscripts add verse 28, *And the Scripture was fulfilled that said, "He was counted among those who were rebels."* See Isa 53:12; also compare Luke 22:37.

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17 I can count all my bones.

My enemies stare at me and gloat.

18 They divide my garments among themselves

and throw dice\* for my clothing.

19 O LORD, do not stay far away!

You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!

**D. SO WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM HOW JESUS' EXPERIENCE MATCHED DAVID'S?**

1. That Jesus took on the worst of our trials and suffering
2. The worst of the consequences of our sin, our living our lives in a world that has turned away from God
3. That he knows what it is like to feel as if God isn't there, to feel abandoned and alone

**E. BUT WE ALSO KNOW, THAT EVEN MORE THAN DAVID**

1. And despite feeling abandoned, Jesus dependence and trust in his Father never wavered
2. Even though God didn't prevent his suffering, Jesus knew that even in death, God would not abandon him
  - a) He would rescue him from all that sin, and the evil forces could bring against him
  - b) He would raise him triumphant over the worst the world and evil could inflict
  - c) He would give him, and all of us who trust in Jesus, victory, new life, and all the promises
  - d) A new life in relationship with him, in which we will never again feel alone or defeated
  - e) When there will be no more suffering or pain, no evil, no living apart from God

**F. SO WHEN LIFE GET'S TOUGH**

1. Even when there is no respite or rescue,

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\* Hebrew *cast lots*.

2. Even to the point of death, there is always hope
3. There is always the sure knowledge that in Jesus, God has already defeated all that is against us
4. That rescue, healing and God's continual presence are already and eternally ours, in Christ
5. So no matter how dark the night may become, the dawn will come, because in Jesus, it already exists
  - a) In him, the future, our future, already exists, and is sure and secure

## CONCLUSION:

### Hebrew 12:1-4

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.

<sup>2</sup>We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.\* Because of the joy\* awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. <sup>3</sup>Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people;\* then you won't become weary and give up.

<sup>4</sup>After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>5</sup>And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children?\* He said,

"My child,\* don't make light of the LORD's discipline,  
and don't give up when he corrects you.

<sup>6</sup> For the LORD disciplines those he loves,

\* Or *Jesus, the originator and perfecter of our faith.*

\* Or *Instead of the joy.*

\* Some manuscripts read *Think of how people hurt themselves by opposing him.*

<sup>2</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Heb 12:1-4). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

\* Greek *sons*; also in 12:7, 8.

\* Greek *son*; also in 12:6, 7.



and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

<sup>7</sup> As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? <sup>8</sup> If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. <sup>9</sup> Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

<sup>10</sup> For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.

<sup>11</sup> No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

<sup>12</sup> So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. <sup>13</sup> Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

## **G. SO, WE CAN GIVE THANKS, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING, AND THE DARKEST TIMES**

1. That God is always with us
  - a) We are never forsaken or abandoned
  - b) Nothing, no trial, no depth nor height, can separate us from the love of God
2. We can give thanks, that in Jesus, we have total forgiveness, total redemption, rescue and total healing
3. Like David, and Jesus, and the great crowd of witnesses of Hebrews 11, we are encouraged
  - a) To never give up on God, never doubt his faithfulness and love
  - b) Knowing that in Jesus we are rescued,
4. The only question is when our suffering will be relieved, not if!

## **A. FOR THIS ASSURANCE AND SURE HOPE**

1. We give thanks, even in the midst of the darkest times

## **B. PRAYER**