

Week of April 30 – May 6

A Cry of Anguish Followed by a Cry of Praise (Psalm 22)

Psalm 22 begins with a cry for help and ends in a promise of victory. This psalm foretells Jesus' cry from the cross, the mockery He received, his pain and thirst, the piercing of his hands and feet, and casting of lots for his clothes. Then, it looks forward to his victory, and people from all nations coming to submit to him.

This Psalm shows the suffering of Christ by crucifixion on a cross. There were many times in David's life where he might have written about his anguish and, while the Psalm was true of King David in his own life, it's even truer of Jesus who deliberately chose these words to describe his agony on the cross (Matt 27:46). Jesus was meditating on the Old Testament as a fulfillment of Psalm 22.

We can easily imagine King David experiencing this agony when he was in what appeared to be impossible circumstances and wondered why God didn't rescue him.

Jesus had experienced pain and suffering during His life, but He hadn't known separation from God His Father. Now He was experiencing what He had never experienced before, what he felt was being forsaken by his Father. He felt the withdrawal of his Father's fellowship along with the actual outpouring of wrath as a substitute for men's sin.

Charles Spurgeon thought about this question and looked at the word, "You." He could understand why Judas and Peter forsook him, but "you, my God, my faithful friend," how can you leave me? Spurgeon says he could imagine the answer to Jesus' question: Why? "Because My Son, You have chosen to stand in the place of guilty sinners. You, who have never known sin, have made the infinite sacrifice to become sin and receive My just wrath upon sin and sinners. You do this because of Your great love, and because of My great love."

Then the Father gave his Son a glimpse of His future reward, with righteous people singing praises to him, chanting the name of God the Father and the Lamb.

The Empty Tomb (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1,4-11; Luke 23:56-24:1-12; John 20:1-18)

As dawn approached Sunday morning, Mary from Magdala and her friend Mary the mother of Joseph, James, and Salome visited the tomb bringing spices and ointments to dress the body. They discussed how they were going to get the stone rolled out of the way to the entrance when they arrived at the tomb.

The earth shook as an angel descended and rolled the gravestone away and sat on it. The soldiers were paralyzed with fear and fainted. As the women approached, they noticed the gravestone was already moved out of the way, so they anxiously entered the tomb. Jesus' body was gone, but they saw two forms in glowing attire. One said, "Don't worry. I know you're looking for Jesus, who was crucified, but he isn't here. Why are you looking for some who is living in a place reserved for the dead? He has risen like he said when he taught throughout Galilee. Look where they laid him. Now tell Peter and the disciples that just as he promised, they will see him before they return to Galilee.

Mary Magdalene left the tomb with tears in her eyes. She encountered someone she thought was a gardener and asked if he knew where they had taken the body of Jesus. "Mary," he said.

Immediately, she turned to him and exclaimed, "Master." She fell before him to embrace and worship him, but he told her not to cling to him. "I haven't ascended to my Father," he said. "Go tell my brothers I'm going to ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

They hurried back to join Joanna and their friends from Galilee, who immediately went with them to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard. The men were not receptive because their story seemed so outrageous. Peter got up and started running to the tomb. John decided to go, too, outrunning him, getting there first. He glanced into the tomb and saw the linen grave clothes but didn't go inside. Peter arrived and went directly in observing the linens were in one place, but the napkin used to wrap Jesus' head was folded and put somewhere else. John came inside for a closer look and saw what had taken place. They left the tomb and went back home.

Meanwhile, the soldiers went into the city to report what happened. The priests assembled the elders and, after considering the matter, paid the soldiers to say Jesus' disciples came and snatched the body while they slept. They promised to keep them out of trouble before Pilate. So, they accepted the bribe and did as they were told, and many Jews still believe their story.

On the Road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-35)

On the way to Emmaus, which was a short distance from Jerusalem, two of Jesus' admirers were discussing the day's events. Jesus drew alongside and asked why they were so sad. Not recognizing him, one of them, a man named Cleopas, said, "Where have you been? Don't you know what just happened?"

When Jesus asked him to explain, he said, "A mighty prophet named Jesus from Nazareth came among us and did great things. But our priests and rulers conspired and had him executed. We thought he was going to free Israel. This is the third day since he was crucified, and some women we know just shocked us with news that his body was missing. They said they met angels who told them he is alive again. A couple of our friends went to the grave and found everything just as they said, but nobody knows what happened to Jesus.

"Silly fools," Jesus replied. "Are you so reluctant to believe what the prophets foretold? Wasn't the Christ to have suffered such a fate to reveal his majesty?" Then starting with Moses, Jesus explained what every prophet in Scripture had to say about him. As they arrived at the village, he acted as though he was passing through, but they invited him to stay with them because it was getting late. So Jesus agreed, and as he sat down to eat with them, he took bread and blessed it and distributed it to them, and their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; then, he vanished from their sight. Turning to each other, they said, "Didn't our hearts burn within us while he talked with us along the way? And while he explained the scriptures?" They got up from the table, and though it was late, returned to Jerusalem to find the disciples gathered with a group of Jesus' followers. Cleopas explained the Jesus appeared to Simon and him on their way to Emmaus, and they didn't recognize him until they sat at dinner. But again, those who weren't there found it too hard to believe.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-31)

While they discussed it, Jesus stood among them and greeted them. Supposing they had seen a spirit, they were terrified. "Why are you upset?" He asked. "Why do you doubt? And why wouldn't you believe those who told you they had seen me?" Then he showed them the wounds on his hands and feet and the place where the spear had pierced his side, asking them to look

him over and touch him. “Does a spirit have flesh and bones as I have?” he asked. They were ecstatic but had a hard time believing their own eyes. He asked if they had anything to eat, and they offered him a piece of broiled fish and honey. So, he took it and ate it in front of them. “While I was with you, I told you what was going to happen to me according to the writings of Moses and the prophets, and what was written in the Psalms.” Then he explained the scriptures and showed them that the Christ had to suffer and, after three days, arise from death. He declared that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be taught everywhere, beginning in Jerusalem. “As my Father sent me, so I send you,” he told them. “You are my witnesses. Look, I am delivering on my Father’s promise to you. Stay in Jerusalem until you are endowed with power from high.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whoever’s sins you rectify will be forgiven, and whoever’s transgressions are not addressed will remain.

Eight days later, the disciples were assembled, and Thomas was with them. The door never opened, but Jesus stood among them and greeted them. He bid Thomas touch his hands and reach down and put his hand under his ribs. He proposed he should stop doubting and believe. “My Lord and my God!” uttered Thomas.

“Thomas, you believe because you see me. Blessed are those who don’t have to see me to believe,” replied Jesus.

Jesus did a lot of other marvelous things that aren’t included in this testimony. But these are recorded so you might believe that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God. And that by believing, you might inherit life by identifying with him.

Jesus’ Last Appearance on Earth (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:50-53)

The eleven disciples went to a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus told them to meet him. They all beheld and adored him, but some of them still had difficulty trusting their eyes.

Jesus said, “All authority in Heaven and Earth is vested in me. Go proclaim the good news to everyone everywhere. Integrate them into the kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit so that they might be preserved and not condemned. Tell them to follow the instructions I have given you. By my authority, they will be able to abolish evil and communicate truth. They will be able to overcome vile serpents and ingest deadly poison without getting hurt. They will attend to sicknesses and restore health. And, by the way, I am always with you until the end of time. It’s absolutely true.

He went with them as far as Bethany. Then he lifted his hands and blessed them. And while he blessed them, he was lifted up from them and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God.

They cheerfully continued to Jerusalem, celebrating Jesus all the way, and stayed at the Temple praising and blessing God. They proclaimed the good news and performed the Lord’s work confirming his presence everywhere they went.