

**SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 24**

I wonder if you have ever noticed the movement in Psalm 24. It starts with the earth. To whom does *the earth* belong? The Lord. He made this world to be his holy temple, the place of his presence. And he made each one of us to reflect that glory, to be his image-bearers. Then the psalm narrows to *the hill*. This is not just any hill—it is “the hill of the Lord.” What hill is that? Zion’s hill—the place from which God himself rules the world. And the psalm asks, “Who shall stand in his holy place?” Who is fit to rule from Zion’s hill? The descriptors of the righteous King: clean hands and a pure heart evidenced by a determination to avoid idolatry and to cling to God alone.

And yet, there is further narrowing, down to *the gate*. It is the gate to Zion’s hill—and who is coming? The King of glory! What is he doing here? He is coming as the righteous King to rule for Zion’s hill. And who is he? It is Jesus! And when did he come to Zion to rule? On Palm Sunday, he came: “Behold, your king is coming to you...Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Matt 21:5, 9). Do you see him? Do you see the Savior?

HYMN: “LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, YE MIGHTY GATES!” *Trinity Hymnal 198*

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits;
the King of kings is drawing near, the Savior of the world is here.

A helper just he comes to thee, his chariot is humility,
his kingly crown is holiness, his scepter, pity in distress.

O blest the land, the city blest, where Christ the Ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes to whom this King in triumph comes!

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heav’n’s employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to thee; here, Lord, abide!
Let me thy inner presence feel; thy grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my Sovereign, enter in! Let new and nobler life begin!
Thy Holy Spirit, guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

PRAYER:

O Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to you! Let me your inner presence feel; enter in so that a new and a nobler life might begin. Rule my heart as you rule from Zion’s hill; rule my heart so that I might reflect your glory back to you. May my heart be a temple, set apart from earthly use for heaven’s employment. May my heart be adorned with prayer and love and joy. Guide me today and always through your Spirit to the glory of your Father, for I pray in your name, Amen.

CATECHISM: Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 29

Why is the Son of God called “Jesus,” meaning “savior”?

Because he saves us from our sins, and because salvation should not be sought and cannot be found in anyone else.



SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 11:25-30

There's so much in this brief section, but two things to notice. First, Jesus stresses his relationship to the Father. Five times in verses 25-27, Jesus either calls God his Father or describes the relationship between the Father and the Son. Why is that important? The only way that Jesus can be a refuge for weary souls is for him to be God. He is not simply a human who knows God as his Father; he is the eternal Son who has come from the Father, who has been given all authority by that Father, and who reveals the Father to us.

Second, Jesus emphasizes his gentleness toward us. He promises rest; he is "gentle and lowly in heart"; his way is easy and light. Why is that important? The only way that Jesus can be a refuge for weary souls is for him to be human. He is not simply transcendent God; he is the human being who is able to sympathize with our weakness, who recognizes our exhaustion, who knows we would fear to come to him if we saw him in his full, awesome glory. Do you see Jesus as both God and man? Do you see the Savior?

HYMN: "DEAR REFUGE OF MY WEARY SOUL" Twit

Dear refuge of my weary soul, on thee, when sorrows rise;
on thee, when waves of trouble roll, my fainting hope relies.
To thee I tell each rising grief, for thou alone canst heal;
thy word can bring a sweet relief, for every pain I feel.

But oh! When gloomy doubts prevail, I fear to call thee mine;
the springs of comfort seem to fail, and all my hopes decline.
Yet gracious God, where shall I flee? Thou art my only trust;
and still my soul would cleave to thee, though prostrate in the dust.

Thy mercy seat is open still, here let my soul retreat,
with humble hope attend thy will, and wait beneath thy feet.
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with humble hope attend thy will, and wait beneath thy feet.

PRAYER:

O Lord Jesus, very God and very man, we worship and adore you. You show us God himself; there is no other God than God whom you show us. You show us his compassion, his gentleness, his grace. You cause us to long to run to you and find the rest for which we long. And Lord Jesus, we are tired, soul-tired, bone-weary. We need the soul-rest and body-restoration that you offer and supply. So, we are coming to you, Lord Jesus, God and man—hear us and welcome us for we come in your name, Amen.

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**SCRIPTURE READING: John 1:29-34**

Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world—but he is a strange lamb. Why is that? Throughout the Old Testament, God's people went and bought their lambs. They brought them to the temple, feet bound, slung across their shoulders. They took them to the altar where the priest was. They put their hands on the head of the lamb and confessed their sins. The priest then took the knife and slit the throat, drained the blood, threw the lamb on the altar, and pronounced forgiveness for God's people.

But Jesus as the Lamb of God is different. He is a lamb who went and found his people. He goes into the water of baptism and identifies himself with their sin. He will go to the temple and present himself as the sacrifice. He will let himself be bound to the beam of the cross, slung across his shoulder. He will carry that cross to the altar called Skull. He will allow his own people to pound stakes into his hands and feet. He will cry out, "Father, forgive them" and "It is finished." Do you see him? Do you see your Savior?

HYMN: "THERE IS A REDEEMER" Green

There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God's own Son,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.
Thank you, oh, my Father, for giving us your Son,
and leaving your Spirit, till the work on earth is done.

Jesus, my Redeemer, name above all names,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah, hope for sinners slain.
Thank you, oh, my Father, for giving us your Son,
and leaving your Spirit, till the work on earth is done.

When I stand in glory, I will see his face,
there I'll serve my King forever, in that Holy Place.
Thank you, oh, my Father, for giving us your Son,
and leaving your Spirit, till the work on earth is done.

PRAYER (adapted from *The Valley of Vision*):

Lord Jesus, if I love you my soul shall seek you, but can I seek you unless my love to you is kept alive to this end? Do I love you because you are good, and can alone do me good? O how I need you to abide in me, for I have no natural eyes to see you. When I see that all sin is in me, all shame belongs to me; let me know that all good is in you, all glory is yours. Grant that I may distrust myself, to see my all in you, my Redeemer, precious Lamb of God, Messiah, King, Amen.

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SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 53:1-6

If you were to try to sum the Gospel up in one sentence, what would you say? Based on Isaiah 53, the answer would be: Christ suffered for us. The Servant *suffered*—that’s clear from the words that are used. He bore griefs, took up pain, carried sorrows, and bore suffering. He was stricken, punished, smitten by God, afflicted. He was wounded, crushed, chastised, beaten. This clearly describes someone who knows intense, brutal, painful, and even divinely inflicted suffering.

Notice that none of this was deserved, none of this was for himself. He does not suffer for his own sins, his own guilt, his own shame. No, the Servant is a *substitute*—he is doing this for us. If you look at verses 4-6, you’ll notice there are four “ours”; four “we’s” and two “us’s.” Why? Because he is a substitute for us, receiving what our sin, guilt, and shame deserve: “*our* griefs, *our* sorrows, *our* transgressions, *our* iniquities.” But who is this Servant? He is Jesus (see Acts 8:26-35), the one who suffered for us. Do you see him? Do you see your Savior?

HYMN: “AH, HOLY JESUS” *Trinity Hymnal* 248

Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended, that man to judge thee hath in hate pretended?
By foes derided, by thine own rejected, O most afflicted.

Who was the guilty who brought this upon thee? Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee.
’Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee: I crucified thee.

Lo, the Good Shepherd for the sheep is offered; the slave hath sinned, and the Son hath suffered:
for man’s atonement, while he nothing heedeth, God intercedeth.

For me, kind Jesus, was thine incarnation, thy mortal sorrow, and thy life’s oblation:
thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion, for my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay thee, I do adore thee,
and will ever pray thee, think on thy pity and thy love unswerving, not my deserving.

PRAYER:

O Lord Jesus, help me to see this reality: that it was my guilt and shame, my inward crookedness and my outward waywardness, that nailed you to the cross. And yet, you did not suffer as my substitute grudgingly; you suffered willingly. Stir my heart with rejoicing that you saved me from my sins and all that my sins deserved. Stir my heart with wonder that you would love me that much. Stir my heart that I might adore you and live out of the overflow of that adoration as I remember your love unswerving. For your glory and my joy, I pray, Amen.

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SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 22:1-8

As our Savior Jesus Christ, when hanging on the cross, and when ready to yield up his soul into the hands of God his Father, made use of these very words (Matt 27:46), we must consider how these two things can agree: that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and that yet he was so penetrated with grief, seized with so great mental trouble, as to cry out that God his Father had forsaken him....

[Critics] have not considered that they greatly lessen the benefit of our redemption, in imagining that Christ was altogether exempted from the terrors which the judgment of God strikes into sinners. It was a groundless fear to be afraid of making Christ subject to so great sorrow, lest they should diminish his glory. As Peter, in Acts 2:24, clearly testifies that "it was not possible for him to be held by [the pangs of death]," it follows that he was not altogether exempted from them.

And as he became our representative, and took our sins upon him, it was certainly necessary that he should appear before the judgment seat of God as a sinner. From this proceeded the terror and dread which constrained him to pray for deliverance from death: not that it was so grievous to him merely to depart from this life, but because there was before his eyes the curse of God, to which all sinners are exposed (adapted from John Calvin's *Commentary on Psalms*).

HYMN: "THE POWER OF THE CROSS" Getty & Townend

Oh, to see the dawn of the darkest day: Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men, torn and beaten, then nailed to a cross of wood.
This, the pow'r of the cross: Christ became sin for us;
took the blame, bore the wrath—we stand forgiven at the cross.

Oh, to see the pain written on your face, bearing the awesome weight of sin.
Ev'ry bitter thought, ev'ry evil deed crowning your bloodstained brow.
This, the pow'r of the cross: Christ became sin for us;
took the blame, bore the wrath—we stand forgiven at the cross.

Now the daylight flees; now the ground beneath quakes as its Maker bows his head.
Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life; "Finished!" the vict'ry cry.
This, the pow'r of the cross: Christ became sin for us;
took the blame, bore the wrath—we stand forgiven at the cross.

Oh, to see my name written in the wounds, for through your suff'ring I am free.
Death is crushed to death; life is mine to live, won through your selfless love!
This, the pow'r of the cross: Christ became sin for us;
took the blame, bore the wrath—we stand forgiven at the cross.

PRAYER:

Almighty God, we stand dumbstruck before the cross of Jesus. That you would send your only Son to the cross for us, that he would bear the weight of our sin, that he would appear before the judgment seat as a sinner, that he would see before his eyes the curse of God, that he would descend into this hell for us—it causes us to love and sing and wonder. Lord, help us to revel in the grace shown to us in Jesus Christ, that we stand forgiven at the cross. And grant us grace to follow in the path of the Crucified One, Jesus, in whose name we pray, Amen.

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SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 53:8-12

On Holy Saturday—the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday—we are reminded that Jesus “made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death” (Isa 53:9). Or as the Apostle Paul’s gospel puts it, “And he was buried” (1 Cor 15:4). Why is this important? Why is this part of the Gospel?

It is important because Jesus our Savior was identified with us in every respect. He identified with us in his baptism—the same waters that washed away sins, he willingly waded into and took upon himself. He identified with us in our sickness—when he touched the sick, the leprous, the blind, deaf, and mute—he not only transferred his healing grace, but he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. He identified with us especially on the cross—taking our sin, our guilt, our shame, our curse upon himself. And he identified with us in the grave—remaining under the power of death for a time.

Yet “out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied”—for he may be resting on this Sabbath day, but he knows that Easter Sunday is coming. He will see with great joy all that his suffering has accomplished: new life, new people, new world, new joy! Do you see the Savior?

HYMN: “WHAT WONDROUS LOVE IS THIS” American Folk Hymn

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
 What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
 What wondrous love is this, that caused the Lord of bliss
 to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
 to bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
 when I was sinking down, sinking down.
 When I was sinking down, beneath God’s righteous frown,
 Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,
 Christ laid aside his crown for my soul.

To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing,
 to God and to the Lamb I will sing.
 To God and to the Lamb, who is the great “I Am,”
 while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,
 while millions join the theme, I will sing.

And when from death I’m free, I’ll sing on, I’ll sing on,
 and when from death I’m free, I’ll sing on.
 And when from death I’m free, I’ll sing and joyful be,
 and thro’ eternity I’ll sing on, I’ll sing on.
 And thro’ eternity I’ll sing on.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, into the rest of this day, into your resting in the grave, into your identification with all of the maladies of my sinful condition, I come. Grant that I would know that your resting is in order to rising—and because I belong to you, so my own death shall be. As the song has it, “When from death I’m free, I’ll sing and joyful be,” because Holy Saturday is followed by Easter Sunday, resting is in order to rising, dying is in order to resurrection day. In the midst of the sorrows and sadness of this life, help me to taste this joy born of your love. For I pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.

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SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 28:1-10; Revelation 11:15-18

Have you ever wondered why we sing the “Hallelujah Chorus” at the end of our Easter Services? Is it because we have a thing for classical music? Or maybe it is because we want to give the choir a chance to show out one last time? No, none of those reasons. Quite simply, it is one of the most appropriate ways we have to respond to the Easter event.

For with the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, literally everything changed. The true King of the World, the Son of God, was revealed, vindicated as whom he claimed to be. Because Jesus is the world’s true king, that means Caesar is not—whomever the Caesar of the moment may be. We may not see all things in subjection to Jesus yet, but we do see King Jesus and that means the kingdoms of this world will be the kingdom of our Christ. All that Jesus promised will come true: new lives in new bodies in a world made new under his rule. And we know this will happen because Christ is risen from the dead!

How should we respond to all of this? There’s only one way: “Hallelujah!”

HYMN: “MAN OF SORROWS! WHAT A NAME” *Trinity Hymnal 246*

Man of Sorrows! what a name for the Son of God, who came
ruined sinners to reclaim: Hallelujah! what a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood,
sealed my pardon with his blood: Hallelujah! what a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless, we; spotless Lamb of God was he;
full atonement! can it be? Hallelujah! what a Savior!

Lifted up was he to die, “It is finished!” was his cry;
now in heav’n exalted high: Hallelujah! what a Savior!

When he comes, our glorious King, all his ransomed home to bring,
then anew this song we’ll sing: Hallelujah! what a Savior!

PRAYER:

We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your Son came, died, was raised, and was installed on Zion’s hill as your anointed ruler. We look forward to the time for the dead to be judged and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth. For on that day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit, in whose name we pray, Amen.

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