

We were listening to Radio 4's '*Money Hour*' - waiting for the news to come on

And there was an economist on the show talking about what it is that makes things valuable

He argued that there is no intrinsic value to anything, instead:

"The value of something is determined by how much somebody is willing to pay for it"

He gave an example of a medieval city under siege

When people are starving, bread is suddenly worth more than diamonds

Here's the question for us today: What is our salvation worth?

I ask this, because of course, we didn't pay for it

It was given to us freely as a gift

But perhaps there is a danger that we focus so much on the freeness of it

That we begin to take it for granted, that we fail to treasure it

Like the child who gets bored of his expensive toy, and leaves it out in the rain

"The value of something is determined by how much somebody is willing to pay for it"

We've just had Matthew's account of the cross read to us

And perhaps it is Jesus' last words that give us the greatest insight into what our salvation cost

He cries out: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

Some have called this the 'cry of despair'

As if Jesus was clueless when he died, not knowing why all this was happening

But this isn't the case at all!

Jesus chose this phrase very carefully, quoting word for word the first line of today's psalm

Psalm 22 has sometimes been called the 5th account of the crucifixion

And it's not hard to see why

It was written 1000 years before Christ

By none other than king David, Jesus' great ancestor

So today we are focussing in the suffering of our king

But we aren't doing this out of morbid curiosity

Like people who slow down at a car crash to see all the damage done

No, we're doing this because we need to know what our salvation cost

Because if you don't know the value of something you will never treasure it

You will see from your handout how the psalm is structured

David flits between describing his suffering and remembering God's faithfulness

But first we'll focus in on the odd stanzas, to learn **what the king suffered**

1 *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

*Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from the words of my groaning?*

2 *O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, and am not silent.*

We aren't quite sure of what led David to write this song

Whether he's being hunted by enemies, or crippled by disease

Whatever his situation, he feels like God isn't answering his prayers

In the midst of suffering he feels abandoned by God

So in verse 2, he's losing sleep

Night and day he crying out – but there's no answer

So he does what we do when we go through hard times

He asks: why is this happening to me?

Fast forward 1000 years and we see Jesus Christ on the cross, with these words on his lips

But where David merely felt forsaken

And desperately wants to know the reason why

Jesus really is forsaken

And he knows the reason why

Matthew records how God's anger covered the whole land in thick darkness

This anger should have fallen on us for our sin, for our rebellion

But like a magnifying glass in the summer's sun

All that darkness was focussed in on a single point, on the Lord Jesus

Jesus was forsaken... that we might be forgiven

This is where a lot of movies about the crucifixion go wrong

Films like *The Passion of the Christ* emphasise his physical and mental sufferings

But by putting all the emphasis there they totally miss the main thing going on

But for Jesus the worst thing was being torn apart from his Father

And yet he did so willingly for our sake...

Do you see just how much your salvation cost?

6 *But I am a worm and not a man,*

scorned by men and despised by the people.

7 *All who see me mock me;*

they hurl insults, shaking their heads:

8 *"He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him.*

Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

In the midst of his suffering, Davis feels almost sub-human – like a worm
Everyone who once loved and followed him
His armies, his people, his family maybe
They all now seem to scorn and despise him
They laugh at him – he's become a joke!
They think he's bet on the wrong horse
"Where's your God now David?"

These are of course the very words used by the mockers at the foot of the cross
"If you're the Son of God why doesn't he rescue you!?"
A few days previously these people cheered as he entered Jerusalem
Hailing him the Messiah, the Son of David – "Praise him" they shouted!
But look at him now. Now much of a Saviour is he?

But worse than this, Jesus was also abandoned by his closest friends
Judas betrayed him
The disciples left him
Even Peter disowned him
But all this was for a purpose...
He was despised and rejected by those he loved
So that we might be brought into God's family of love
Do you see how much your salvation cost?

12 *Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.*

13 *Roaring lions tearing their prey
open their mouths wide against me.*

David compares his suffering to being surrounded by fierce beasts
If you've ever been charged down by a 200 stone bull, you'll know how scary that can be
And David is completely enclosed by them - there's no way out
Lions can run at 50mph, and have razor sharp claws and teeth
And they are tearing at David's flesh, like he's prey
How appropriate then that the psalm was sung to the tune of *doe of the morning*
A doe is a female deer – David is comparing himself to lion food!
So no wonder he is in physical and emotional turmoil:

14 *I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.*

*My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted away within me.*

15 *My strength is dried up like pottery,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.*

16 *Dogs have surrounded me;
a band of evil men has encircled me,
they have pierced my hands and my feet.*

17 *I can count all my bones;
people stare and gloat over me.*

18 *They divide my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothes*

David's enemies systematically remove everything he has from him
All of his physical strength - as his hands and feet are pierced
All his emotional strength - as his heart melts away
All his possessions – as his clothes are taken off him
All of his dignity – as he is stripped naked, they gloat over his body

But notice at the end of verse 15 that he sees God's hand behind all this

You lay me in the dust of death

This is a reference to the curse on Adam in Genesis 3: *to the dust you will return*

But in Psalm 22 the curse of death isn't falling on sinners

Here it's falling on the innocent king...

Jesus died bearing our curse in our place

On August 16th 1987 a plane leaving Detroit airport crashed soon after take off

As the plane smashed into the motorway 155 people onboard were killed immediately

Only one person survived: a four-year-old girl named Cecelia

When rescuers found her alive, they couldn't believe she was on the plane

They assumed she must have been in a car on the motorway

But when the flight register was checked, there was her name

She had survived because as the plane was plummeting

Her mother Paula, made decision to unbuckle her seat belt

Got down on her knees in front of her daughter

Wrapped her body around her child & wouldn't let go

Her body took the shrapnel blast, her daughter lived

Today Cecelia would be about my age, 34 years old

And each day I imagine she would remember the price that was paid for her life

She would remember the love she was shown

And I don't she will ever forget what her salvation cost

Friends, do you see how much your salvation cost?

Do you see how much you are loved?

Suffering often has the effect of producing all sorts of doubts in us

Our health, our disappointments, our battles with sin, our treatment from the world

We might look at these things and wonder whether we are really loved by God

So seeing what David suffered, we want to know **how did the King endure?**

That's our second point, focussing on the even stanzas

We've seen already how David alternates back and forth

Between describing his suffering, and the God he's trusting in

Notice each of these stanzas begin with the phrase 'yet you', 'yet you', 'but you'

3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;

you are the praise of Israel.

4 *In you our fathers put their trust;*

they trusted and you delivered them.

5 *They cried to you and were saved;*

in you they trusted and were not disappointed.

Perhaps one sleepless night David is pouring over Israel's history books

And as he recalls God's past faithfulness to his people, he remembers:

How the LORD delivered them from bitter oppression in Egypt

How the LORD delivered them through the desert to the Promised Land

How the LORD delivered them from all the fierce enemies along the way

God's track record gives David reason for hope in his situation

You did it in the past, you can do it again

9 Yet you brought me out of the womb;

you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast.

10 *From birth I was cast upon you;*

from my mother's womb you have been my God.

11 *Do not be far from me,*

for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Putting down the history books, David now picks up the photo album of his life

There's a scan of himself in the womb – God was faithful to me then

Over the page he sees an awkward teenager being anointed king – God was faithful to me then

He flips the page again is a shot of him defeating Goliath – God was faithful then too

At every step along the way, God proved faithful to David...

19 But you, O LORD, be not far off;

O my Strength, come quickly to help me.

20 *Deliver my life from the sword,*

my precious life from the power of the dogs.

21 *Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;*

save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

David's only just described how he has lost everything, all strength, all possessions, all dignity
And in that moment, he might have cursed God
He might have given up on God, thinking that God had given up on him

But he doesn't do that

Seeing his own weakness – he calls the LORD in verse 19 "his Strength"
He knows that his life is not ultimately in the hands of the dogs, the lions or the bulls
But in the hands of the LORD
Come quickly, he prays

If you ever read Agatha Christie's *Inspector Poirot* novels or seen them on TV

You'll know he was followed about by his assistant Captain Hastings
Whose main literary purpose was to constantly question Poirot about his methods
Asking why he is wasting time chasing seemingly irrelevant minor details in the murder case
Now this is funny for us, because he seems to have forgotten the previous 200 cases
Where the inspector solved the case precisely on the basis of chasing a minor clue!
Poirot's track record proves his trustworthiness and competence
And yet strangely, Hastings just keeps on questioning him

When we are suffering or experiencing loss

I think it's quite natural for us to question God's trustworthiness, God's competence
But at such times, we would do well to emulate David in this psalm
Keep turning back to God's past track record
Both in the Scriptures, and in your own life

We might think that the thing which will keep us enduring through suffering is the strength of our faith
That is incorrect

The thing which will keep us going is knowing the strength of the One we have put our faith in
So friends, keep meditating on God's character
Keep reading your Bible...
Because if your Bible is falling apart, you won't be!

You may have noticed there is something of a 'gearshift' in the second half of this psalm
But as far as metaphors go, 'gearshift' just doesn't do justice to the change we see here
The tone of this second half is so different
It's almost as though David got out of his old car, and swapped it for a totally new one!

He no longer feels abandoned and forsaken by God
He is no longer suffering physically, socially and spiritually
He is no longer crying out for rescue, down from the dust of death
He's not doing any of that – because he has been rescued!

So here, 1000 years before Christ, we see a foreshadowing of the resurrection
So in our final point we'll ask the question: **why was the king raised?**

22 *I will declare your name to my brothers;
in the congregation I will praise you.*

23 *You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honour him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!*

Did you notice how king David is no longer lonely and isolated?
Now he has a family! He has brothers! He has a people again!
And he's leading them to worship God in the temple, in the congregation

It's like he's passed a new law that the entire nation must praise the LORD!
Come on everyone! Gather in Jerusalem! Come to the temple!
We *must* feast! We *must* celebrate!
There's nothing more important to do than give God glory! But why?

24 *For [God] has not despised or disdained
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.*

We need to know that back in those days, a king represented the strength of nation
So a nation's *welfare* and *security* and *future*
Were all bound up with the health of their king
Which means that when God rescued David
It isn't just David rejoicing, but the *entire* nation!

And it is the same for us – the resurrection of Jesus Christ ought to be a cause for great joy in us!
It's not just a fact a history or a creed to recite
God's rescue of our king from death is our good news
Because our eternal *welfare*, our eternal *security*, our eternal *future* are all bound up with Jesus
Just look at verse 25

25 *From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you will I fulfil my vows.*

26 *The poor will eat and be satisfied;
they who seek the LORD will praise him
may your hearts live forever!*

I'm sure that girl Cecelia - whether she is today - is full of praise for her mother
Whenever people ask about her family, I'm sure her words are full of love and affection
I doubt you'd have to remind Cecelia to talk like this or tell her to praise her mum's deeds
No, it would be natural to her, it's something she simply wants to do!

My observation is that the Christians I know who are most full of praise and joy
Are usually those who have suffered the most, and have been sustained through it
Or those who have sinned the most, and have now been forgiven of it
That shouldn't surprise us - verse 26:
The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him

Our King was raised in order that we might be people of praise

Not a people of dry intellectual adherence to doctrine
Not a people who keep their faith hermetically sealed up on Sunday mornings
But a people who when they gather, sing with enthusiasm and gusto!
A people who when asked about their faith, are naturally full of love and affection for their king
A people who have ambitions to make Jesus known, not just here, but everywhere - verse 27:

27 *All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,*

28 *for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.*

29 *All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—
those who cannot keep themselves alive.*

Whoever you are here today, God invites you to this heavenly banquet
You may be British, you may be from overseas
You may be rich, you may be poor
You may be strong, you may be weak
But what unites us is that we cannot keep ourselves alive
One day all of us will go down to the dust of death

But if we turn to the LORD God, in the same way that he lifted up his king from the dust
So he will do for us, even inviting us to eat at his table – this is our future
Today would be a great day to accept that invitation - come chat with me afterwards

But Christians, in light of this future we have a task to get on with

We are not just people of praise, but of proclamation:

30 *Posterity will serve him;*

future generations will be told about the Lord.

31 *They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn —*

for he has done it!

David imagines a future day when God's posterity, that is, his children from all nations

Will go out and proclaim his righteousness to a future generation

And the exact message they are to share is the last phrase of verse 31:

That he has done it

In John's gospel Jesus' final words on the cross aren't 'My God why have you forsaken me?'

But: *it is finished!*

It has been done!

And this is the good news that we now proclaim to this generation

That sin has been dealt with

That the price has been paid

That eternal life is now on offer

Proclamation isn't something we *have* to do

This is something we *want* to do

Just like when Jesus broke out of that tomb on that first Easter Sunday

For those who trust in Jesus

A new dawn begins, a new day starts, it's a new morning!

The old age of sin and death is over, and the new age of life has begun

How appropriate that David sang this Psalm to the tune of:

The Doe of the Morning

Friends, if you've seen how our King suffered, how he endured, and why he was raised:

Then be people of praise

Be people of proclamation