

**“BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD”**

**I. Introduction**

- A. We saw in our New Testament reading that the 26th verse of this Psalm was quoted by the crowd when they welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.
- B. This Psalm has one other connection with the events of Jesus’ last week.
- C. The Jewish people sang Psalms 113-118 during the Passover, and it is generally agreed that Psalm 118 would have been the song that Jesus and his disciples sang at the conclusion of their Passover meal.
- D. It is the song that Matthew is referring to when he writes “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” (Mt. 26:30)
- E. Psalm 118 was probably the last song that your Savior sang before he went to the cross to die for your sins.
- F. That being the case, it is certainly fitting for us to spend time reflecting upon this Psalm as we enter into the week that many Christians set apart as a special remembrance of Christ’s death and resurrection.

**II. Recounting the Deeds of the Lord (1-18)**

- A. Our text begins by summoning all of God’s people to give thanks to him for his goodness and for his steadfast love that endures forever.
  - 1. God is good beyond all measure.
  - 2. In addition to praising him for the good things that he does for us, we should also praise him for the goodness that is central to his very nature.
  - 3. One of the most important ways in which we exercise our faith in the Lord is by trusting in his goodness.

4. There are times in our lives when we are tempted to doubt God's goodness, but we should not tolerate such thoughts.
  5. Whenever they enter into your heart, you need to give yourself a stern talking to, reminding yourself of all that the Bible tells you about the goodness of the Lord.
- B. The psalmist also praises God for his "steadfast love", a phrase that translates the Hebrew word *hesed*.
1. God's *hesed* is the special love that he extends to his covenant people.
  2. It is his faithful love, a loyal love, a love that always endures, a love that will not let his people go.
  3. God's steadfast love means that he is unwavering in his commitment to carry out our salvation.
  4. That commitment remains constant amid all of our wanderings and failings.
  5. God's steadfast love binds him to us.
  6. It causes him to bring about our salvation regardless of what it costs him to do so.
- C. We need to respond to this great love by expressing our thanks to the Lord, both in our words and in our attitudes.
1. If there is one word that sums up what the Christian life is all about, it is the word 'gratitude.'
  2. Every Christian should always make much of God's great patience and mercy, for the simple reason that we should always be deeply conscious of our need for his patience and mercy.
  3. We do not deserve the good gifts that the Lord bestows upon us.

4. That being the case, we should always spend far more time giving thanks than we spend complaining.
  5. In fact, we should be disappointed with ourselves if we complain about anything at all.
  6. One prayer that you can always be praying is for the Lord to help you be more grateful.
- D. God displays his goodness and his steadfast love by delivering his people from distress.
1. This is the focus of verses 5-13, which begins with these words: "Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free."
  2. One thing that we can learn from this is that when troubles come upon us, we need to call out to the Lord for help.
  3. Martin Luther may be blunt, but he puts it well when he says, "Thou must learn to call, and not to sit there by thyself, and lie on the bench, and and shake thy head, and bite and devour thyself with thy thoughts; but come on, thou indolent knave, down upon thy knees, up with thy hands and eyes to heaven, take a Psalm or a prayer, and set forth thy distress with tears before God."
  4. When we pray to God in the midst of our distress we are praying from our hearts, and such prayers go to the heart of our heavenly Father.
- E. As the psalmist reflects upon his past experience of deliverance, he says, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"
1. Notice that he does not say that he will not suffer, but that he will not fear.
  2. There are many things that people can do to us.

3. There are many ways they can harm us.
  4. But we can always be certain of our preservation when the Lord is on our side.
  5. His help is sufficient for us.
  6. The Lord is greater than any threat, any trouble, any worry, any grief that you will ever face.
  7. Even if you cannot find any help on earth, you can be confident that your heavenly Father has neither forgotten nor forsaken you.
  8. You will experience many trials in this life, but God is sovereign over all of them and will cause them to work for your ultimate good.
- F. The psalmist says, "I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD."
1. Imagine what those words would have meant to Jesus when he sang them on the night before his death.
  2. The psalmist was recounting a time when he was delivered from deadly peril, but Jesus sang these words knowing that he was going to die.
  3. He could sing them because he knew that he would not remain in the tomb.
  4. He trusted that he would be raised to new life on the third day.
  5. If you are united to Christ by faith, then you are united to him in his resurrection.
  6. You will be raised from your grave.
  7. You too can say, "I shall not die, but I shall live."

- G. We should also note what verse 17 teaches us about the Lord's purpose in continuing to preserve our lives in this world.
1. The psalmist says that he will live and recount the deeds of the Lord.
  2. The reason why God has upheld your life thus far is that you might recount his deeds.
  3. John Calvin says it well: "God does not prolong the lives of his people, that they may pamper themselves with meat and drink, sleep as much as they please, and enjoy every temporal blessing; but to magnify him for his benefits which he is daily heaping upon them."
  4. Use the time that is given to you in this life to glorify your God by recounting his deeds.

### III. Entering the Gates of Righteousness (19-25)

- A. The next part of Psalm 118 pictures the singers approaching the gates that lead to the temple courts.
1. As they draw near to these gates, they cry out, "Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD."
  2. These were the gates that led into God's presence in the temple, the place of public assembly under the old covenant.
  3. One of the things that this shows us is that the redeemed of the Lord should draw near to him not only in private worship but also in public worship.
  4. Charles Spurgeon is correct to point out that "Those who neglect public worship generally neglect all worship; those who praise God within their own gates are among the readiest to praise him within the temple gates... Public praise for public mercies is every way most appropriate, most acceptable to God, and most profitable to

others.”

- B. The temple gates were called the gates of righteousness because the One who made his presence dwell in the temple is perfectly righteous.
1. He is the thrice-holy God, the God before whom the prophet Isaiah cried out, “Woe is me!”, the God who dwells in the high and holy place.
  2. Another reason why the temple gates were called the gates of righteousness is because only the righteous could enter through them.
  3. Psalm 24 says that only those who have clean hands and a pure heart, only those who do not lift up their souls to what is false, only those who do not swear deceitfully – only such people can ascend the hill of the Lord.
  4. Who can measure up to such a high standard?
  5. If the gates that lead into God’s presence can only be entered by those who are completely righteous, then those gates would have to remain forever closed to all of us.
- C. The good news is that God has made a way by which the gates to his presence can be opened up to us.
1. He has sent Jesus as the Righteous One who approaches those gates on our behalf.
  2. As it says in the letter to the Hebrews, “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf... he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. 9:24, 26b)
  3. By offering himself in our place, Jesus has secured our right to enter the gates of the Lord.

4. This is why there is no other way to God apart from faith in Christ.
  5. As Jesus says in the Gospel of John, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and go in and out and find pasture." (Jn. 10:9)
  6. This is what the writer of Psalm 118 is ultimately pointing to when he says, "I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation."
- D. In the next part of our psalm, an architectural metaphor is employed.
1. The psalmist writes, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."
  2. As far as the original context is concerned, these words were written in reference to Israel, and perhaps to Israel's king.
  3. The "builders" were the world powers of the day.
  4. They looked upon Israel with scorn because it was a small and insignificant nation.
  5. But God had chosen to work through little Israel to bring about his plan of redemption, a plan that would eventually encompass people from every nation, every tribe, and every tongue.
  6. Those who had influence and power in the world rejected Israel, but the Lord used her to lay the foundation for the kingdom of God.
  7. Jesus came into the world as a true Israelite, and as such he is the true fulfillment of the rejected stone that God made into the cornerstone of his kingdom.
  8. Jesus quotes this verse from Psalm 118 in his parable of the wicked tenants, where he shows that in rejecting him, the chief priests and the Pharisees were rejecting the stone that this Psalm is referring to.

9. The leaders of Israel thought that they were the ones who were building God's kingdom, but they rejected the One whom God set apart as the true foundation of his kingdom.
- E. Israel's leaders rejected Jesus because they had their own ideas about what Israel needed, and Jesus did not measure up to those ideas.
1. The same thing happens today.
  2. The stone is still being rejected.
  3. We should neither be surprised nor discouraged by this.
  4. The New Testament writers tell us that this cornerstone will be "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" to those who do not believe.
  5. The world will never be impressed with a gospel that focuses on a crucified Messiah.
  6. Such a message seems weak, unconvincing, offensive, irrelevant, and marginalized.
  7. The world is impressed by things that are powerful, things that are popular.
  8. We need to be careful that we are not affected by this mindset.
  9. We need to remember that though the message of the cross is foolishness to the world, to those who are being saved it really is the power of God and the wisdom of God.
- F. When we see this, we will marvel at what the Lord has done.
1. The gospel is truly "marvelous" in the eyes of a believer.
  2. Because of Christ's resurrection from the dead, the day of despair has been transformed into the day of victory.



3. This day that the Lord has made is the dawning of the new creation.
  4. For those who have been given eyes to see, it is indeed a day to rejoice and be glad.
- G. While this is true, this great day of salvation has not yet been fully realized.
1. We are still waiting for the consummation of our salvation.
  2. This is expressed in verse 25, where the people of God cry out, "Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!"
  3. Notice how this verse follows right on the heels of a verse in which God's people are rejoicing in what he has done for them.
  4. This reminds us that we live in a period of overlap between the already and the not yet.
  5. We rejoice in God's great day of salvation, but we are still awaiting the day of its completion.

#### IV. Giving Thanks for God's Steadfast Love (26-29)

- A. In the last part of our psalm, the focus is upon the celebration of the salvation that God has brought about for his people.
1. The singers welcome Israel's king with shouts of blessing as he approaches the temple.
  2. They say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!"
  3. As we noted earlier, these words were on the lips of the crowd when they welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday.

4. The fact that the people greeted Jesus in this way tells us that they recognized him as the Son of David, the Messiah.
- B. In verse 27, as the worshippers celebrate the deliverance that God has brought about through his Anointed One, they say, "Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar."
1. This is a reference to the sacrifices that were performed on Israel's feast days, especially the sacrifice of the Passover lamb during that great feast.
  2. Jesus sang these words on the night when he was betrayed.
  3. He sang these words knowing that the salvation that they celebrate was about to be brought to completion by his atoning death.
  4. When Jesus sang of "The stone the builders rejected," he knew exactly what that rejection was going to look like.
  5. When Jesus sang, "Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar," he knew that he was about to experience the reality that was foreshadowed by Israel's sacrificial system.
  6. Jesus had come as the true Passover Lamb.
  7. He was going to be bound to a cross, not with cords, but with nails.
  8. He was about to offer his life at the true altar of God for the salvation of all whom the Father gave him.
  9. Jesus sang this Psalm knowing that he was about to become the salvation that it celebrates.

## V. Conclusion

- A. Martin Luther loved Psalm 118.

- B. He had verse 17 inscribed on the wall of his study: "I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD."
- C. Luther claimed this psalm as his own.
- D. He wrote, "I love all holy Scripture, which is my consolation and my life. But this Psalm is nearest my heart, and I have a peculiar right to call it mine... It is my friend... But it may be objected, that this Psalm is common to all; no one has a right to call it his own. Yes; but Christ is also common to all, and yet Christ is mine. I am not jealous of my property; I would divide it with the whole world... And would to God that all men would claim the Psalm as especially theirs! It would be the most touching quarrel, the most agreeable to God — a quarrel of union and perfect charity."
- E. If you claim this psalm as especially yours, it will help you to remember the price that Christ paid to deliver you from Satan, sin, and death.
- F. If you regularly recount the deeds of the Lord, you will never have any doubt that he is good, and that his steadfast love really does endure forever.