



## 2<sup>nd</sup> week of Lent | Singing the Prophetic Hymn of Victory

"Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

(Luke 13:35)

### **Main point:**

When you are really battling something, (whether it be a destructive thought pattern, or navigating a difficult relationship, or resisting a temptation), what comes out of your mouth? Do words of praise and blessing come out? Or is it words of cursing and discouragement?

In today's Gospel passage Jesus refers to a verse in Psalm 118. This Psalm actually tells a story which revolves around praise being given to the Lord, not when everything is going well, but rather in the midst of battle. It is a hymn of victory, which prophetically declares their safe refuge in the Lord and his future coming in glory.

### **Intro |**

Over the past few weeks, we have been using the Third Order Communion Service. I chose this because so much of the liturgy was inspired by the book of Revelation, which we were studying. But, as many know, in the Third Order Holy Communion service, the proclamation "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" is not included.

We have all found it a little amusing when we came to celebrate Holy Communion, that some of us are so used to including the words "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord", they tumbled out of our mouths – without even a second of thought.

Now, don't get me wrong, I would always rather words of blessing tumble out of our mouths, than some other types of words.

So, when I saw the Gospel passage today, and noticed that Jesus himself used this same proclamation of praise, I decided to do a little research into what it means, and why we say it every week in our Holy Communion liturgy.

If you'd like to open your Bibles to Luke chapter 13, verse 31 and we'll look at the conversation that Jesus was engaged in.

Some Pharisees came to warn Jesus that Herod was planning on killing him.

Jesus, however, was determined not to let any person sway Him from fulfilling his Father's mission, and so he told them,

*"Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'<sup>33</sup> In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"* (Luke 13:32-33)

Then Jesus wept over Jerusalem, warning the leaders of their impending judgement (Matthew 23:1-3). It is almost as though, for one moment, Jesus is captured by his Father's grief, over Israel's continual rejection of Him and His messengers.

They had completely rejected Him as the Messiah, God's chosen anointed King. Now, without His protection, Jerusalem and its temple will be left vulnerable, or 'desolate' because there was no one to protect them.

It had reached a point that, Jesus says, they will not see Him again, until He returns as the conquering King.

To send this message, however, Jesus recites a line from Psalm 118, which both the religious leaders and the Jews would have been very familiar.

If you like to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 118, I'd like us to see how this psalm fits in, not only with today's Gospel passage, but why we use this same declaration every Sunday in our liturgy of Holy Communion.

**Point 1 | Psalm 118 tells a story. It is a psalm of praise, which arises from a time of distress, when the prayer seeks refuge in the Lord, in the midst of the battle.**

When we look closely at Psalm 118, we discover there is a story line in how the psalm progresses. Verses 1 to 9 set up the scene: this is a psalm of praise, but it arises out of a time of distress (v5), when the speaker seeks refuge in Lord.

Why are they in distress?

In verses 10-14 we learn that he is in the midst of a battle, hard pressed on every side, but he trusts in the Lord to give him victory.

Then, from verses 15-18, the battle is over. Victory has been won and "shouts of joy resound." Let's just stop there for a moment.

In the ancient world when there had been a great victory, the king would hold a great celebratory feast. He would invite all the people to join him.

As the people entered the gates, they would sing songs of praise and thanksgiving for their victory the Lord had granted them.

So, we read, *"Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD."* (v19)

Then, in verse 26 they are greeted by the priests and are blessed, and they pass on to the altar of a temple, where they would offer sacrifices and praise.

It is in verse 26 we read, *"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord".*

Now we know, in a few weeks, we will read these words again.

We know that when Jesus entered Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, the crowd cheered and laid palm branches on his pathway, saying "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 21:9)

So, now, the royal tone of the psalm becomes Messianic, as the words applied to the entry of a warrior king centuries before are now put on Jesus of Nazareth.

But, what is important for us to recognise is that the Psalm is being sung in the midst of the battle.

We get this sense from what Jesus said.

Jesus knew that he was also in the midst of a battle. He said, *"I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal"* (Luke 13:32)

Jesus was continually battling against not only with the forces of evil, but also against the force of sin and death.

His struggle began with the temptation in the desert and continued as evil spirits taunted Him even as He commanded them out of possessed individuals.

It was evil forces who worked through Herod the Great and the chief priests and scribes. They were merely puppets and collaborators with the evil Roman Empire.

But Jesus also speaks of his battle against death and the grave.

However, Jesus knows He has already gained the victory over these for he says, "*on the third day I will reach my goal.*"

When Jesus accomplishes His goal, the whole world will see that He is the One who comes in the name of the Lord God.

Before we move on, let's break down the phrase a little more.

The word 'blessed' means, to pronounce God's protection and goodness. So, if you declare blessing upon the One who comes in the name of the Lord, you are declaring your confidence in the One who comes with the authority and power of God.

That is why Jesus told people He came "from the Father" (John 16:28) and that the Father had given Him all authority (Matthew 28:18).

It is because Jesus spoke with God's authority that "the people were amazed at his teaching" (Mark 1:22).

He drove out unclean spirits (Mark 1:21–28, 39; Luke 4:31–37), healed the sick, and forgave people's sins (Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 7:48).

Jesus controlled the elements (Matthew 8:23–27), raised the dead to life (John 11:38–44), and cleansed the temple (Mark 11:27–33), all by God's mandate.

But the Father's authority also involved, "laying down His life in sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 10:18). It was God the Father, who "granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those" God had called (John 17:2).

**Point 2 | To proclaim "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" during our thanksgiving is to testify of Christ's triumph over evil, sin and the grave.**

When we recite the words, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." We are actually joining in with what Isaiah heard being shouted by the seraphim (Isaiah 6:3).

We proclaim just as the angels proclaimed, affirming the eternal reign of God.

Then, (if we follow a Second Order service) we say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

Why do we say this as well?

We are making a prophetic declaration of praise and recognition that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world who came in the power and authority of God, to free us from our sins and grant us salvation.

Notice in Psalm 118, "The LORD is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation." (v14)

Jesus said, "I have come in my Father's name," (John 5:43).

All that Christ did was commissioned by His Father. Everything Jesus said and did was to glorify His Father and accomplish the work of making Him known to humans so that they might be saved (John 17:1–24).

**Point 3 | Our declaration and participation in the Lord's Supper is a prophetic act which testifies of Christ's eternal reign and victory.**

Now, you'll notice in the title of my message today, I called it a 'prophetic hymn of victory'.

Why did I insert the word 'prophetic'?

As we progressed through the book of Revelation, we read that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10).

Whenever we testify or witness to the reign of Jesus Christ the King, we are engaging in a prophetic act. We are prophesying!

Remember, prophecy does not only involve foretelling future events, it also involves forthtelling or testifying of the reign of Christ on earth. But, we are called not just to *speak* words of prophecy, but to *live* prophetically. That is, we shape our lives so others can see what the culture of the Kingdom of God is like.

In fact, that is why Paul instructed the believers at Philippi to regard themselves as 'citizens of heaven'. We are called to live lives which testify that we are being transformed from glory to glory into the image of Christ, so we are pictures of Christ's reign in heaven on earth to the world (Philippians 3:20-21)

Whenever we speak of our faith, or live holy lives that witness to our faith, we will be testifying of Jesus' reign and rule – that is inspired by the spirit of prophecy.

So now we get a glimpse of why many people understand Psalm 118 and the Thanksgiving or Holy Communion celebration as a prophetic declaration of God's present and future reign.

When we share Holy Communion, we are not *only* remembering Christ's last supper with His disciples. We are not *only* looking back at an event that took place in the past.

Rather we also "look for His coming again." And while we are looking, we – week after week – testify that Christ reigns as King. And because of His victory over sin, we have confidence He will bring us with him, as His eternal kingdom is fully established on earth.

**Application | While the battle rages on earth, we are called to ensure words of blessing and victory pour forth from our mouth.**

If there was ever a time when the forces of evil were making themselves obvious, it is now. There are not just rumours of wars, floods and calamities, we see them graphically displayed on our television screens.

Yes, we too are living in a battle zone.

So, what are we to do?

We, like the psalmist, accept the distress that accompanies living on a battlefield.

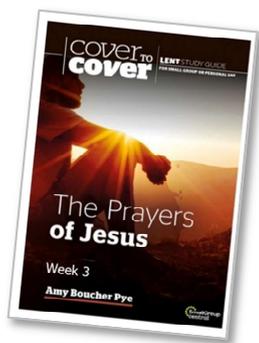
But our response is we decide to turn our cry to the Lord, knowing His promise to bring us into a spacious place (v4-5)

We decide not to be afraid, for we know humans are unable to steal our eternal reward. (v6)

Rather we are courageous, knowing that "the LORD is with [us] and is our helper". (v7)

And what about our enemies? Well, in verses 10, 11 and 12 "he looks in triumph at them" for "in the name of the Lord, I cut them down."

We triumph over the evil forces in our life, as we trust in God and speak the name of Jesus over our situations. Then we too will share in the blessing that is bestowed on the One who comes in the name of the Lord.



## *Lenten Devotional - Week 3*

Week 3 of our Lenten Devotional is available for your use.

Each week we'll reflect on the Prayers of Jesus.

As we give special attention to praying for the lost souls of Southlakes, I pray that you create space each day for spending time with Jesus, learning to be transformed into His likeness.