



Good Friday

3rd April 2026

The Psalm That Found Its Voice on the Cross

I'm sure everyone of you has some favourite Christian songs. We know that Jennie McNiven's favourite is "God is our strength and refuge", because it reminds her of her children's school days. Others of you find "Amazing Grace" very moving, often touching tender memories. I think there's a song for every season in the Christian's life. When we are high on a mountain top and everything is going well, we might sing "Tell out my soul ...". If we are in a dark and troubling time, we might sing "Great is your faithfulness". When I'm facing an impossible situation, I will often sing to myself "God will make a way, when there seems to be no way ...". I'm sure you've got your favourites as well.

I think every generation has songs that seem to capture a people's hearts—lyrics that everyone knows because their words resonate deeply within us. In Israel's story, the psalms were those songs. In times of great joy, they'd sing Psalms 95 to 100. In times of sickness and affliction, they'd sing Psalms 3, 6, 39 or 102. I wonder what they'd sing in times when God felt very distant, like their prayers were just floating into space and no one was listening? We've all being there. That feeling of silence can shake you to the core. The people of Israel knew that feeling too, and they put it into song.

Psalm 22 was one of those songs — a raw, honest cry from someone who felt completely abandoned by God. Everyone knew it. It was part of their shared story. Now fast-forward a thousand years. On the cross, Jesus begins to speak. But, no doubt He doesn't have strength for the whole psalm, just the words: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" spill out of His mouth. To the bystanders it might have sounded like despair, but all the Jews present knew it was something more. That one line carried the rest of the song with it — a song that starts in pain but ends in praise.

So today, as we stand before the cross, we're going to listen to that song — the ancient lament that became flesh — and see how, even in the silence, God was writing redemption into every note. Because we'll be seeing how closely Psalm 22 and Mark's account of Jesus' death relate, I'd invite you to look up both passages in the Bible in the pew. You'll find Psalm 22 on page 785 and Mark 15 on page 1452.

Let's start with Psalm 22, which actually starts with desperation: "*Why are you so far from helping me?*" (v 1) It's the prayer of someone who feels utterly deserted. And we can relate to that, can't we? Those moments when God feels distant, when every prayer seems to fall flat. Jesus steps right into that human experience. He doesn't avoid our pain, He names it.

And in doing so, He shows that faith doesn't mean pretending everything's fine. Faith can sound like a cry. It can be messy, desperate, and still deeply sacred. Even when He feels forsaken, Jesus is still talking to God. That's the power of lament—it's pain spoken in the direction of hope.

A bit further into Psalm 22, we read about mockery: "*All who see me mock me; they shake their heads.*" (v 7) Then in verse 18: "*They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my clothing.*" (v 18) And isn't it striking that Mark shows those exact things happening at the crucifixion? Soldiers gambling for His clothes. Passers-by wagging their heads and sneering, "*If you really are the one who could rebuild the temple in three days, come down from that cross!*" It's confronting to realise how precisely the psalm mirrors what happened to Jesus.

Mark is making sure we see it. Jesus isn't caught in some random event of injustice. He's fulfilling a story that's been sung for centuries—the story of a righteous sufferer who holds onto trust even when surrounded by cruelty. Every taunt, every nail, every torn piece of cloth—it's Scripture living and breathing right there on that hill.

If we go near the end of Psalm 22 something shifts. It's like the clouds start to lift. The psalmist moves from "*Why have you forsaken me?*" (v1) to words of confidence: "*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord.*" (v27) There's this widening view—that somehow this story of suffering will reach the nations, that people everywhere will come to know who God is through it.

That is mirrored in Mark's Gospel. Notice that the words of a Roman centurion, who was standing at the foot of the cross, got recorded. This man was not a Jew, he wasn't part of the chosen people, but he looks up at Jesus and says, "*Surely this man was the Son of God.*" (Mark 15:39) Do you see the connection? In the midst of all the violence and chaos a non-Jew, a gentile, recognised who Jesus really is. In that moment, that last promise in Psalm 22 became a reality—the nations were beginning to turn towards God. Even as Jesus dies, the world is being drawn in. From despair comes deliverance. From suffering comes salvation.

After Jesus' death, Mark points us to the women who stood watching from a distance—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. They'd followed Jesus, cared for Him, supported Him. They're there when all of the others had fled. Notice that the Psalm ends with a promise. In verse 30, "*Posterity will serve Him; future generations will be told about the Lord.*" These women become that first link in the chain of witness. They hold the story when all seemed lost. They waited when the tomb felt final. And they become the first to discover resurrection hope. Sometimes faith looks exactly like that—quiet endurance, staying when everyone else walks away, trusting that even in the silent darkness, God is still doing something.

Finally, Psalm 22 ends with these words: "*They will proclaim His righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it.*" (v 31) Those words echo so beautifully with Jesus' final declaration in John's Gospel: "*It is finished.*" (John 20:30) Different words, same truth. The work is complete. Salvation is accomplished. What looked like failure became fulfilment. "*He has done it.*" Makes the cry of anguish become a song of victory.

So what do we do with all this on Good Friday? Maybe it invites us to bring our own laments to God. To realise it's okay to cry out, to question, to not understand—and still be held in God's faithfulness. Thankfully, Psalm 22 teaches us that pain and praise can exist in the same breath, in the same prayer, in the same song.

On this day, standing at the foot of the cross, we can hold both grief and gratitude hand-in-hand. Because the cry of abandonment has already become the hymn of redemption.

What began as “My God, why?” ends as “My God—thank you.”

And that’s why, strangely, beautifully, we call this Good Friday.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and loving God,
on this Good Friday we stand before your cross—awed by your love, humbled by your sacrifice. When we feel abandoned, remind us that Jesus has already walked that road, turning silence surrender into salvation and anguish into hope.

Teach us to trust you in the shadows, to see your presence even when you feel far away, and to hold onto faith that whispers, *“You have done it.”*

May the story of the cross shape the way we live, so that in every moment of pain or doubt, we find our courage in your finished work. Through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. **Amen.**

Reflection Questions

1. When have you most felt like the psalmist—or like Jesus—crying out, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” How did you respond in that moment?
2. What does Jesus’ willingness to pray Psalm 22 from the cross reveal about trusting God even in suffering?
3. How does recognising that Jesus *fulfilled* Psalm 22 change the way you see the crucifixion story?
4. The psalm moves from despair to hope. Where in your own story do you sense God quietly turning pain into redemption?
5. The final words—“He has done it”—mirror “It is finished.” What difference does it make to live as if that’s already true?