

## Jesus Delivered

Psalm 22:19-31

Friends, what have been the big changes that you've seen in your life?

The big developments in technology,  
the big revolutions in behavior  
the big changes in beliefs and values?

A few years ago I heard a remarkable fact,  
Apparently one of the big issues facing our cities 120 years ago  
was the question of where to put all the dead horses.

It seems like a strange thing to ask doesn't it? But think about it!  
120 years ago our economy was literally driven by horsepower  
We relied on horses for work, for transport, for all sorts of things, and so  
disposing of all the *dead* horses was becoming a problem!

But then what happened?  
Someone invented the internal combustion engine,  
and we moved from literal horsepower to figurative horsepower  
as we started to drive cars and trucks.  
And so the problem was solved!  
although, as you sit in traffic  
you start to wonder whether we've simply created  
a different kind of problem, don't you!

So there's one very big change from 120 years ago.  
What will be the big changes in the future?  
Theo will *probably* learn to drive in 14 or 15 years time.  
I say *probably* because maybe it's possible  
that driverless technology might be common place by then.  
If it isn't, then I suspect the ability to drive a car might be a skill that  
Theo only uses for a time before he buys a car that drives itself.  
Certainly his children will not need to learn to drive a car.

Isn't that a mind-blowing concept?  
There is coming a day when learning to drive a car  
will be on the same level as learning to ride a horse;  
It'll be something you do for recreational purposes only.  
The historical period where people drove cars  
will only cover about 150 years of the human story.  
Driverless technology is coming, and it will change everything.

Some of you here this morning may have an inkling of where I'm going with this.  
Today is Easter day—the day we remember the resurrection of Jesus—

which was a development, an event, that *changed everything*.  
It changed everything not only for the first disciples of Jesus  
but it has big implications for us as well.

And in order to get a grip on what some of these implications are,  
we are picking up where we left off on Good Friday.  
This Easter weekend we are using Psalm 22 as our guide,  
and as we saw on Friday,  
Psalm 22 cast a large shadow over Christ's death on the cross.

But I think it also has something to say about his resurrection.  
While the first half gives voice to what it means to suffer and be forsaken,  
the second half is the voice of someone who's seen God act with great power.  
In raising Christ from the Dead, God has acted in a world changing way,  
and when God acts in a world changing way  
the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Psalm 22 teaches us how to respond.

We'll pick things up from verse 19,  
where David ends his lament with one more plea for God to act.  
But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.  
<sup>20</sup> Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. <sup>21</sup> Rescue me from  
the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

We spoke on Friday about the possible scenarios  
that led David to find himself at the bottom of the pit.  
We don't know the details, but we do know that for a popular King  
David managed to make himself a lot of enemies,  
enemies who wanted to finish him off.

But one thing we notice in the first half of the Psalm  
is that David never stops asking for God's help.  
Throughout the Psalm David is absolutely stubborn in his belief  
that God is powerful, that God is capable, and that God is trustworthy,  
even though God seems to be a little slow in his response.  
And so, even though he feels that he cannot descend much lower,  
David still cries out to God You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

And as we turn the page in our church Bibles and read on from verse 22,  
we see that God *did* come to David's rescue.  
It really is a Psalm of two halves:  
the first sees David deep in despair but persistent in his trust towards God;  
the second is this joyous celebration of a man whose prayers have been  
answered.  
And again, we don't know anything specific about *how* David was delivered,  
but we do hear the response that the answer brought forth from David's lips:

Verse 22 I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you. You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

What's the first thing that David does when he experiences God's deliverance?  
He turns towards God with words of praise *in the context of the assembly of God's people*: in the assembly I will praise you.

God's people have always been in the habit of gathering together in worship.  
In the OT they first gathered together at Mt Sinai  
David's son Solomon would build the Jerusalem temple  
where the Israelites would come together to worship God.  
These days it's church meetings like this where God's people assemble  
And it's the gathering of God's people  
That's the first port of call for a man who's experienced God's power at work.

Notice the activity in the assembly happens in two directions:  
Yes he's praising God for what he has done,  
but he's also speaking to the others who are gathered:  
"Come one guys!" he's saying "God's answered my prayer, let's praise him!"  
Church isn't only about God,  
and it isn't only about your friend who you've come to see, it's about both.

He goes on in verse 25  
From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;  
before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.  
Sometimes when I'm speaking with non-churched people  
and they discover what I do for a living  
they ask some very good questions, such as  
"How do you decide what to speak on each week?"

Well, as David says,  
the theme of what we say in the assembly comes from God!  
We open the Bible and we seek to hear what it is God has to say  
and we speak about it  
and then return our prayers and praise back to God.  
Sometimes it's not only hearing what God has to say  
but, like David's example, it's recognizing how God has acted.

This is the regular pattern of Christian life together:  
We receive input from God,  
then we encouragement of one another with that input,  
and then we send prayer and praise back to Heaven.

And its not just prayer, praise and Bible reading that forms our worship,

Verse 26 The poor will eat and be satisfied.  
We worship not only with words but with actions and good works as well.

So what's all this got to do with Easter day?  
It sounds like I'm giving a description of what we do in church  
rather than a description of what God has done in raising Jesus from the dead.

Well, just as God delivered David, so too did he deliver Jesus.  
and just as David responded in praise with the assembled people of God,  
so too did the disciples, after they saw Christ raised from the dead.

We see just a glimpse of this in our reading from Matthew 28.  
The first people to see the risen Jesus were the women at the empty tomb.  
In verse 9 Matthew tells us that suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said.  
They came to him, clasped his feet *and worshiped him*.  
And then, in the other accounts of the days that followed the resurrection,  
we see the disciples continually gathered together in worship and praise.  
Luke ends his Gospel account with these words: While Jesus was blessing the  
disciples, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and  
returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising  
God.

Because it is *the great* demonstration of God's power,  
the resurrection demands a response of praise from the assembled people of God.  
We exist as a church because of the resurrection of Jesus.  
We meet on a Sunday because of the resurrection of Jesus,

In fact I cant really think of a compelling reason to come here if Christ was still dead.  
If Christ is not raised, then he simply remains another failed historical leader.  
But he's not dead, which means he is the real deal:  
He is the one who is God incarnate  
he is the one who has wiped out our sin,  
he is the one who will come again to judge us,  
and so, like the disciples, we make the commitment to assemble in his honor,  
to carry out all the things that an assembly is meant to do.

If you believe in the resurrection then church becomes a big thing for you,  
Because a commitment to this group, or one like it,  
that's the first response to this world-changing news.

And there is another response as well.  
As David continues towards the end of this Psalm  
his focus shifts *from the assembly to the wider world*.  
Verse 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,

It's not just the local gathering of God's people who ought to know about God's power and how he's able to answer our prayers;  
This is something that people *everywhere* ought to hear about,  
and something that people of *every nation* ought to respond to!

Why is this a message for every culture and not just for our own little group?

Because, verse 28 dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.  
We recently developed a new mission statement here at Waitara Anglican:  
*To build a community from many ages and cultures  
that helps people meet Jesus, trust Jesus and grow more like Jesus.*

Why are we aiming to build from many cultures?

Because as David explains, it's the Lord who rules over the nations.  
The God of the Bible is not Western; he's not English or American.  
He's not Chinese or Korean, (even though there are many more Christians in those countries than there are here!).  
He can be claimed by each one of us, because he rules over everyone.  
The people of the world need to meet their ruler:  
they need to hear his voice  
to understand the love that he has for each one of us  
and know what gifts he wishes to give us.

And so how will they come to know this?

David has an idea, cast your eyes down to verse 30: Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his  
righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!  
The nations will come to know their ruler because people will tell them.  
Yes, God could manifest himself in front of people, revealing himself that way,  
But God's chosen method is to send human messengers,  
human messengers who will encourage the nations to turn towards the Lord.

And so, 1000 years after David,

the resurrected Jesus spoke these words to his disciples,  
we heard them in our second reading:  
All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make  
disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the  
Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am  
with you always, to the very end of the age.  
You can hear the same themes coming through can't you?  
Because universal authority lies with Jesus,  
his disciples are to go out and teach the nations to be his followers.

In the church we call this activity *mission*;

And mission happens because of the resurrection of Jesus.  
If David developed a vision for the nations in response to his deliverance,  
Then we also aim for the nations in response to *Christ's* deliverance.

If you believe in the resurrection, then *mission* becomes a big thing for you.

It becomes a big thing in your prayer life,  
it becomes a big thing in your financial decisions,  
it becomes a big thing in your own actions  
as you become willing to declare to the people of your own generation  
the same news that David was declaring: God has done it!  
He's paid for our sins and defeated death!

And so it's in these ways that the resurrection means big changes.

Historically the resurrection gave birth to Christianity, that's a big change.  
And personally it can mean so much to each of us:  
it's the guarantee that the cross worked, the guarantee of eternal life,  
but it also means a new focus on *church* and a new focus on *mission*.

When God gets active, we respond as David did:

praise in the assembly, and mission to the nations.  
Do you believe in the resurrection? Do you?  
Then let church and mission become a renewed focus.

I'll lead us in prayer.