

Jesus, Our Cornerstone

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[0 : 0 0] It's so nice to be with all of you tonight and it's a great honor and privilege to preach from this Psalm in the Bible. We are continuing our series during the summer called Summer Psalms.

So last week James Eglinton preached on Psalm 16 and today we will look at Psalm 118 together and it's great that you have so many Bibles with you and you can just keep it open.

And I will refer to the Psalm every now and then maybe a few fun facts in the beginning. Psalm 118 is the Psalm right in the middle of the Bible.

Psalm 119 right afterwards, the longest chapter in the Bible. Psalm 117, the shortest chapter in the Bible. I'm not quite sure how that is going to connect to my sermon but it's fun to know.

So there you go. Psalm 118 is a very significant Psalm. Not that some Psalms are significant and others are not significant at all.

[0 : 5 8] No, all Psalms are significant but this Psalm is quoted 13 times in the New Testament which is more than any other Psalm. And the reason why it's quoted so often is because it's all about Jesus.

The whole Psalm is all about Jesus. It is the gospel in the Old Testament. It is the good news in the Old Testament. And I hope to show you that this Psalm portrays Jesus as the cornerstone on which we have to build our life and how Jesus became the cornerstone and what exactly that means for us.

But first we will look at the Psalm itself. How is it structured? What is the picture this Psalm is painting? And so just a few facts about the Psalm.

So Psalm 118 is part of a collection of Psalms within the book of Psalms. So Psalm 113 to 118 are called the Egyptian Halal.

And you will know by the word Halal. We know it from the other word hallelujah. Hallelujah means praise, pray to God or praise the Lord. So halal means praise.

[2 : 0 9] Hence the word Egyptian praise. Why Egyptian? because this group of Psalms usually would have been sung at the festivals.

At the three annual festivals the Jews would celebrate each year. One of them being the Passover. And the Passover is all about the Exodus and how God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt.

So this Psalm would have been the last Psalm the Jews would have sung at the Passover dinner. And we know that Jesus had a Passover dinner on the day before he was crucified.

So that's how we know that Jesus actually sang this Psalm. And this was the last Psalm he ever sang before he died. Just like we have Easter songs or Christmas songs they have these Psalms to celebrate the Passover and the focus on the Exodus thematically on how God delivered them.

And that's something really important we should keep in mind when we talk about Psalms. Psalms are songs. If I would ask any one of you to name your favorite book some of you are readers they like to read.

[3 : 24] Probably some kids you like to read Harry Potter. And I would ask you to quote one page word for word to me. You probably couldn't do it.

But if I would ask some of the kids here to recite their favorite song from Taylor Swift they could probably do it. Both of them have about 280 words.

The reason why we can remember one is because it's a song it's got melody. It does something with us. It evokes emotions in us. And that is what Psalms do and we shouldn't forget that.

So as I go through the Psalm with you I'll try not to take the melody out of the Psalm but I still will try to explain some of the things we read about. So what is happening in the Psalm?

In the Psalm we get a feeling of excitement. There's some great occasion that is happening. There's excitement around the place. It starts off with this liturgy.

[4 : 21] I'll give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever. Let Israel say His steadfast love endures forever. It's like a call and response kind of thing.

Sometimes I think in Gallic, Psalm singing, if I'm not completely mistaken, the same thing happens where someone gives a line and then the rest joins in. So we have some sort of festival going on, some sort of ceremony, a procession where people with a single person in its mid, a single worshiper at its center, they progress towards the temple to give thanks for God's deliverance and the victory He has given them.

Why victory? Why is there one person you may ask? So in verses 10 to 12, if you want to look at in your Bible, it says, all nations surrounded me in the name of the Lord, I cut them off.

They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side. They surrounded me like bees. He's repeating that. And that is one person speaking at that point. And it's probably a king.

That is what a lot of commentators say. Why a king? Well, you and I would probably not pray like that. We probably wouldn't say, the nation surrounded me.

[5 : 37] You and I don't get in situations where we feel surrounded by the nations, do we? Who does feel surrounded by nations? Probably a military leader, probably someone who is a high politician, probably a king.

So we have this picture of a king riding through the gates of the city towards the temple to bring a sacrifice.

We see that in verse 27. It's a very difficult Hebrew sentence to translate, but it says this, bind the festival sacrifice with cords up to the horns of the altar.

So that is what is happening in this sun. One person followed by a crowd, one king probably followed by a crowd. And the people sing to him and pronounce blessing on him.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. And they sing, save we pray, oh Lord, save us we pray. And save us we pray is in its original language in Hebrew.

[6 : 43] Usually preachers aren't supposed to talk about Hebrew and Greek, but you all are clever people, so I think we can manage. I bet that 90% of you will have heard that Hebrew sentence in its original language because it's called hosiana.

And we sometimes say that still, hosana to the highest. We quote from the Bible. Hosana means save us we pray, oh Lord. But during that time, it had become a sentence that also meant you have saved us and therefore we praise you.

It's like a hooray. And I think there are some Bible translations that actually translated like that, like a hooray. But what it means is it's a prayer, save us we pray.

And now we get to the really, really cool part because we get the fulfillment of this Psalm in the New Testament, in the person of Jesus Christ. And some of you are already thinking, okay, city gate, a procession, a king riding.

Well, Matthew chapter 21, in Matthew chapter 21, we get a picture of Jesus riding on a donkey through the gates of Jerusalem.

[7 : 59] And what do the people say? The people saying hosana to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, hosana.

They quote exactly precisely from this Psalm. And what week have we got? What's the week? It's a Passover week. So it all fits together, you see.

The true king has come and the people greet him. Well, five days later, they crucify him. But on the first day, they sing blessings and pronounce blessings upon the king.

And in the whole chapter, Matthew chapter 20, 21, we see Jesus referencing this Psalm again and again. In verse nine, as I said, hosana to the son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Then later on, in verse 15, we get the children who sing hosana.

[9 : 05] And the interesting thing is that throughout the chapter, there is a theme going on of people who understand that Jesus is the Messiah, that he is the true king. And there are people who don't get it.

And it's usually, it's not the people you would expect to understand Jesus' message. It's the people who are outside us. So the children in verse 15, they understand it.

The chief priests and teachers, they don't get it. In verse 31, we see that Jesus commends tax collectors and prostitutes and say, they actually get what I'm all about.

And the Pharisees and priests and teachers, they don't. And the parable of the tenants, which Zach Purvis preached on last Sunday morning, Jesus actually quotes this Psalm himself.

In reference to himself, he says, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in her eyes.

[10 : 03] It actually says in the Bible in that passage that the teachers and priests, they know that Jesus is talking about them. Yet they don't want to believe that.

They hate it because Jesus did not come in the way that they wanted him to come. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. It's the irony of Christianity.

Jesus did not come as a mighty warrior. Jesus came as a suffering king, as a servant. So the builders that reject the cornerstone are the teachers, the priests, the religious leaders of Jesus's time.

Jesus is the cornerstone, the rejected stone. So we will talk about the cornerstone maybe for a bit because what is a cornerstone? Why is it so important?

What does it mean? We don't live in Jesus's day and age. So we don't really understand some of the things he says just like this morning. Most of us haven't sown a mustard seed.

[11 : 07] Most of us haven't built a house. Most of us haven't laid the foundation of a cornerstone. But before the times of the industrialization, the cornerstone was a really, really important stone.

It was the first stone that people would lay down when they built a house and they would have a ceremony for that. And it's such an important stone because it gave the direction for the rest of the house.

So you needed a stone that was perfect, without blemish, so it could give you the directions of all the other walls. It was a stone that kept the walls together.

And if you take it out, the whole house would crumble. So when the Bible says that Jesus is the cornerstone, and we know that he is because he says that about himself, then that means that God chose him as the cornerstone, the foundational stone to build his church on him.

In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 20 to 21, we read that Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

[12 : 23] The teachers, the Pharisees, the chief priests, they didn't see the true value of Jesus. I don't know if you are interested in celebrity stories sometimes.

I quite like to hear a good underdog story. So for example, Tom Brady, famous, one of the best American football players ever, was drafted as the last person in his draft and became one of the most successful players of all time.

J.K. Rowling, she wrote the Harry Potter books, she was rejected by 12 publishers before someone took her on. The band Queen produced a song called The Human Repsity that was rejected at first and became one of the best songs of all time.

So we see these stories of people don't see the true value of something that later becomes really important and successful. Now we're not talking about a song here or an athlete or an author, but we talk about the most important person for the most important thing that has ever happened in human history.

We talk about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, and he was rejected by his own people. Let me ask you a few questions.

[13 : 43] Let's make this a bit more personal. So if the temple of God, if his people, if the church is built on Jesus as the cornerstone, that also means that we as individuals need to be built on Jesus as our cornerstone.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, we read that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. So let's make this a bit more individual just now. And let me ask you a few diagnostic questions.

First of all, very obvious. Are you building your life on the one true cornerstone? We just learned that the symbolism means to say that the cornerstone is the most important stone in a building.

So how do you view Jesus? Is he the most important stone in your life building, as it were? Or is he just another stone among many?

If you take Jesus out, would that make a difference or not? I read a quote by C.S. Lewis that I thought was very helpful. And he writes this. He says, Christianity, the claims of the gospel, if false is of no importance, but if true of infinite importance, the only thing it cannot be is moderately important.

[14 : 58] You see, Christianity, if false, it doesn't matter. If no importance at all. And if true, it is of infinite importance. The only thing it can't be is moderately important.

Let's think about that. If you are not building your life on Jesus as your cornerstone, what is your cornerstone instead? And what makes you think that it'll be strong enough to bear the weight of your house, even when winds come?

When the storm comes? Over the course of history, people have built on many things. People have built on money. Inflation came and it was all gone. People have built on their skills, their talents, their ability as an athlete.

And they injured themselves and their identity was gone. People have built on their beauty. And 60 years later, I've realized our skin was all wrinkled up and it wasn't so smooth anymore.

I mean, my skin is never really smooth. So that's not a problem I have to deal with. Maybe it's your intellect, your intelligence. You think you're very smart. And one day you start to forget things and you get a diagnosis and it is not what you can build on.

[16 : 10] But if you build on the one and true cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and you take your life directions from him, you will be able to lean on that promise that he gives you here in Psalm 118, that he will never ever forsake you or leave you.

If you become a Christian, you become a living stone in the temple of the people of God. Being held together by Christ as our cornerstone, his steadfast love endures forever, steadfast love, hasted love, country translated, his covenant love, meaning he will always be there for you no matter what, even if you mess up.

So how did Jesus become the cornerstone? What happened there? Why is it so important? Why did people reject him? I've already said that Jesus was not what people had expected.

He did not come to free the Jews in their time of the oppression of the Romans. He came to free them of something else. He came to free them of their sins.

And the people did not understand it. They wanted someone who came with a sword, an armor, and who would maybe lead an army against the Romans. But Jesus said, no, no, you're not getting it.

[17 : 25] My sword is the word of God and my only weapon is radical love. And that's what he did. He actually became the cornerstone by saving us through his sacrifice.

Verse 27, the Lord is God and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festival sacrifice with quartz up to the horns of the altar. You see, Psalm 118, it finds its fulfillment in this chapter in Matthew 21.

And in the whole Easter week, Jesus did not come in the way people expected him to come, not as a mighty warrior king, but as a king who suffers and who serves.

And in that night before he was betrayed, he would have sung this Psalm again with his disciples as the last Psalm before his death, setting his eyes upon what was to come, setting his eyes on the cross.

You read in Matthew chapter 26 that when they had sung a hymn, when they had sung the Psalms, they went out to the Mount of Olives and from there on the story continued.

[18 : 27] I don't know what Jesus felt like when he sang the words, the Lord is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do to me? I shall not die but live.

But he already knew at that moment what was going to happen. On the road in Jerusalem, when he rode into the city, he had already set his mind on the cross.

The true deliverer had come to deliver his people once and for all as a sacrifice. You see the ceremony that is described in Psalm 118, that procession, it all became true, one commentator writes.

What those who took part in such a ceremony could have never first seen was that it would one day enact itself on the road to Jerusalem, unrehearsed, unliturgical and with explosive force.

In that week when God's realities broke through his symbols and shadows, the horns of the altar became the arms of the cross and the festival itself found fulfillment in Christ, our Passover.

[19 : 34] Jesus came to be our Passover. This is, as it were, the new Passover lamb. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 7, Paul says, get rid of the old yeasts so that you may be a new unleavened batch, as you really are.

For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. You see, Jesus came in that Passover week knowing that although the Israelites sacrificed thousands of lambs, they were not enough to atone for the sin of the world.

You needed something else. You needed someone who was a true God man, who was perfect, who was obedient, perfectly obedient and earned salvation for all humankind.

And that could only be done by the Son of God, only by Jesus Christ. And it is in Him that we find forgiveness and purpose.

It is through Him that we are justified and made right with God. It is on Him that we can rest now as our cornerstone. The Westminster Confession says, faith is a resting upon and a receiving.

[20 : 50] That is what we do as Christians. We don't do it. That's the irony. We believe that Jesus did it for us and we rest on that.

Through Him we are justified and we have all the blessings that He wants to give us. We are adopted, sons and daughters of the highest King.

We are justified. We are united with Him. I went to a wedding and I will close with this. I went to a wedding just a couple of weeks ago in Germany and the pastor, he quoted a German theologian called Dietrich Bonhöfer.

And I've never heard that quote before, but I thought it was so fitting. Of course, fitting for a wedding, but fitting for our faith as well. He says this, love doesn't want anything from the other person.

Love wants everything for the other person. And our true is that for Jesus. He doesn't require anything from us because there is nothing we could have given Him.

[21 : 57] And yet He gave everything for us when He died for us in. See Jesus didn't judge us, but He came to be judged in our place. He didn't hate us, but He came to be hated and to be rejected.

He did not reject us, but He was rejected for us. He did not make us suffer, but He suffered for us. And once you see that and once you understand that, there is only one appropriate reaction.

And that is to say, Jesus, you died for me, so I will live for you. He is the true cornerstone, the suffering King, the true new Passover lamb of God.

2000 years ago when He died on that cross, when the people were singing the words of Psalm 118. And that is true for all eternity.

And it is true today so we can sing together with the whole church of all ages. We can sing, I shall not die, but I shall live.

[22 : 58] The Lord is my song and my salvation. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Let us pray. Father, we thank You that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be our true cornerstone.

May I ask that maybe there is someone here tonight who hasn't let you in their life, who hasn't accepted Your love for them. And I pray that You would just draw them close to You, Father.

That through Your Son, Jesus Christ, through Your Holy Spirit, You would warm their hearts, You would touch them, You would open their eyes so they would see that it's all true. That You are a loving and good God and that Your steadfast love endures forever.

We thank You so much for this Psalm and for the gift of music and to enjoy this Psalm with melody. And as we will sing this Psalm now, I pray that You would make that a reality in our hearts, that You would let that be an explosive truth in our heart and that that would be transformative for our lives.

In Jesus' name we give thanks. Amen.