

Going Up While Crying From the Depths

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Preacher: Terry McCutcheon

- [0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles. Terry McCutcheon is preaching to us this evening, and we're looking together at the Psalms. It's Psalm number 130, page 518, if you have one of the church Bibles there.
- A short Psalm, but a very profound one. Indeed, that's the very word, profound, depths.
- It is from the depths, de profundis, that the psalmist speaks this prayer. Psalm 130, a song of ascents.
- Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy.
- If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.
- [1 : 10] I wait for the Lord. My soul waits. And in his word I hope. My soul waits for the Lord, more than the watchman for the morning, more than the watchman for the morning.
- O Israel, hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.
- Amen. May God bless to us his word. I invite you to take your Bible, and to turn with me again to Psalm 130, which you will find in page 518 of the Pew Bible.
- And as you turn that page up, a brief prayer. Make the book live to us, O Lord.
- Show us thyself within thy word. Show us ourselves, and show us our Savior. And make the book live to us, for Jesus' sake.
- [2 : 21] Amen. Amen. I wonder if you are familiar with the television show called Top of the Pops. Let me just explain what the show was about for those not familiar, or those of a younger generation.
- Top of the Pops ran from 1964 until 2006, and was usually broadcast in BBC One on a Thursday evening. It was a television show that was dedicated to the music charts here in the United Kingdom.
- Each week, the show would reveal to the watching population what the highest-selling song had been that particular week. And remember, this was during the time before music was available to download on computers and iTunes.
- You had to physically leave your house and go to a music store, or a record shop, as we called them. And you had to buy a single vinyl record, or a single CD.
- So after purchasing their single record, or CD, folks would be tuned in to Top of the Pops on the Thursday evening to find out what had been the most popular song amongst the nation that week.
- [3 : 32] The charts would begin at number 40, and work their way down, sometimes revealing new entries to the charts. And remember playing the music as it counted down? Do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do.
- And you're in at number 29. Then into the Top 20. And then the illustrious Top 10. 10, 9, 8, 7. The Top 10 was revealed until we got to number 1.

Revealing what the song was that was Top of the Pops. Revealing which song had captured the mood, the thoughts, the feelings, and the heart of the nation that particular week.

Some songs had a very fleeting relationship with the nation. One week at number 1, and then the song disappeared into musical obscurity. Others managed to stay there for a few weeks, with the longest being there for 17 weeks.

In different decades, amongst different generations, different genres, different types of song captured the mood, thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the nation's people.

[4 : 38] Resonating with the heart of the nation. And friends, I share all of this, I hope, as a helpful way into this evening's sermon. As we come to the book of Psalms, and to the songbook, the hymn book of Israel, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

More than any other book of the Bible, the book of Psalms capture the Christ from the heart of the people of God. And not just one generation of the people of God, but every generation of God's people.

And not just during a particular part of life, or a particular stage of life. These Psalms, these songs, resonate with the believer all through life.

As we turn to the pages of the Psalms, we find there is an honesty, a transparency, and a great dose of realism about the life of faith. That we can all identify with, and take great encouragement, and great assurance from.

And if we are really honest, the honesty, transparency, and realism that we find in the Psalms, we don't often find too much from each other. Which is why I think the Psalms are so popular amongst God's people.

[5 : 49] My title this evening is Going Up While Crying From The Depths, which I've taken from the heading of the Psalm, and the first words in the Psalm. If you look to the heading of the Psalm, A Song of Ascents, which quite literally means a song of going up.

Well, going up where, you might ask? Well, going up to Jerusalem. If you would look in your Bible, you would see that Psalms 120 to Psalm 134 all have this heading.

These 15 Psalms are known as the Pilgrim Psalms, the Songs of the Pilgrims, the Ascent Psalms. For these Psalms were known by the people of God as they were going up to Jerusalem.

Going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the three great feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Atonement. So the Psalmist was going up. But look to verse 1.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. The Psalmist is crying out from the depths. He is going up while crying from the depths. Well, friends, if we are here this evening and we are truly Christians, then just like the Psalmist, we are the pilgrim people of God.

[7 : 03] We may not be on a physical journey to the city of Jerusalem, but we are on a spiritual journey to the heavenly Jerusalem. As the writer of Hebrews writes, but you have come to Mount Zion to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

So this Psalm has something to say to us because just like the Psalmist, we are a pilgrim people. And I am sure, friends, that this Psalm resonates with all of our hearts today.

I would like to take the Psalm under three headings. Firstly, in verse 1 and 2, needing the mercy of God, needing the mercy of God. In verses 3 to 6, knowing the mercy of God, knowing the mercy of God.

And then thirdly and finally, verse 7 and 8, sharing the mercy of God, sharing the mercy of God. Well, firstly then, verse 1 and 2, needing the mercy of God.

It is always good that when we come to the Psalms that we note the particular tone of the Psalm that we are reading. I think it's fair to say the Psalmist is not having a good week.

- [8 : 13] It's certainly not his best day. The Psalmist is not rejoicing. He is despairing. As Psalm 130 opens, we do not find the Psalmist at the top of the pots.
- No. The picture that is given us here is a picture of a man drowning in the depths of the sea. And these verses are very similar to the opening verses of Psalm 69.
- Let me just read those for you. Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire where there is no foothold.
- I have come into deep waters and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying out. My throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.
- That's the picture we, exactly the picture we have here in these opening verses of Psalm 130. The Psalmist is not rejoicing. He is despairing. He is in the depths of despair.
- [9 : 12] He is crying out, I am drowning God. He is a man who has sunk to the bottom where there is no foothold. And he will surely die if he sinks any lower.
- These cries from the Psalmist made me think of a song by the Beatles that reached number one in 1965. Help! I need somebody. Help!
- Not just anybody. Help! You know I need someone. Help! John Lennon wrote that song John Lennon wrote that song in 1965 when he was 25.
- He died at the age of 40. And in an interview with the Rolling Stone magazine a couple of months before he died, he was asked about that song. And this is what Lennon said.
- Those words were not just a lyric. Those words were the cry of my heart. But no one came with an answer. And friends, this song by the Beatles is a song that we need to get crying out before God.
- [10 : 11] Help! But truth be told, friends, it's not help we often cry out before God. No, it's usually another song by the Beatles entitled We Can Work It Out.
- And friends, I'm not just talking about people out there in the world. No. I'm talking about people in here. People in the church. Some of you ought to be crying out, Help! But instead you are crying out, I don't need any help.
- I've got this one covered. I can work it out. I mean, after all, God helps those who help themselves. Well, friends, let me just make this absolutely clear.
- You cannot work it out. And God doesn't help those who help themselves. God helps those who cannot help themselves. And the psalmist knows he cannot help himself.
- So the psalmist is crying out from the depths. Help! I need somebody. Help! Not just anybody. Help! You know, I need someone. Help! But look at who he's crying to.
- [11 : 16] He is not crying out to family members or friends. He is not doing what the pop song of the 1990s suggested. You've got to search for the hero inside yourself. And searching for the hero inside yourself is often the view taken by modern day therapy and counselling that all the answers are within, they say.
- Now, don't misunderstand me, friends. I'm not knocking therapy and counselling. There's a lot in there that's good and should be celebrated. And that's the sort of work I'm involved in, supporting those with addictions.
- These things are okay in themselves. But if they are not governed by the cross and scripture, then sometimes their outcomes can be absolutely disastrous. No, the psalmist is not looking to family members or friends or looking to answers within.
- He is not trying to work it out. He's in the depths and he has a need and a hunger for God. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
- O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy. He needs God to hear him and he needs God to take notice of him.

[12 : 26] There are many people in the depths of one situation or another and it's only then that they ever begin to think about crying out to God. People are maybe crying out to God presently, maybe due to financial difficulties or because they're locked up in a police station or a prison cell or maybe crying out to God from the depths of a sick bed.

They need God they are hungry for God to intervene. They want God to hear them and they want God to take notice of them. But often what people want is this.

What they want is a miracle. They want the financial position to be resolved. They want to be freed and to be let out of jail. Or they want to be healed from the sickness or the disease that has invaded their body.

Now friends, please do not misunderstand me. The Lord is concerned for these things. But it seems according to Psalm 130 there are other concerns even more pressing than these things.

So what does the psalmist want? Why is he crying out to God? Well, the psalmist wants mercy. Oh Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive.

[13 : 39] My pleas for mercy. Now friends, mercy is a real need because verse 3 tells us that the psalmist's real problem is his iniquity.

It is his sin. He is drowning under the deluge of his sin before a righteous and a holy God. It's his sin that has got him in the depths. He is crying out from the depths of his sin.

And friends, unless a man or a woman has cried out to God from the depths of their sin, then they have never cried out to God at all. He is drowning in the depths of his sin.

It's his sin that is the real problem. And friends, that's the world's real problem. Not everyone might believe that, but name me a problem in the world or in your life that isn't caused by your sin or the sin of someone else.

Behind the world's financial difficulties lies greed. Behind broken relationships, selfishness. Behind the crimes of those in prison cells, it's sin that's the problem.

[14 : 42] And even those lying in sickbeds with diseases and illnesses, these are from the effects of sin in a world separate from God. Friends, we do not need a miracle for our situation.

We need mercy for our sin. You and me and all the world are exactly like the psalmist, needing the mercy of God. Because just like the psalmist, our real problem is sin.

Well, verse 1 and 2, the psalmist needs the mercy of God. But secondly, verses 3 to 6, knowing the mercy of God. Knowing the mercy of God.

In verse 1 and 2, we have a picture of the psalmist drowning and unable to stand in the bottom and unable to swim to safety. But now as we come to verse 3 and 4, the psalmist has moved from the sea to the courtroom, where again the psalmist cannot stand due to his guilt.

But it is here he knows the mercy of God. And that is because knowing the mercy of God is knowing the real gospel. Look at verse 3.

[15 : 52] The psalmist knows that his real problem is sin, which leads to real judgment. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? I once heard a story from the life of Arthur Conan Doyle, who created the character of Sherlock Holmes.

And the story goes like this. Arthur Conan Doyle sent a telegram to 12 of the most respected men in London. The words on the telegram read as follows.

Flee. All is revealed. That's all the telegram said. And the story goes that within 24 hours, six of those men, six of the most respected men in London, had made arrangements to leave the country.

Flee. All is revealed. Now, friends, I wonder if just for a moment you would imagine there was a DVD of your life, of your full life, of all of your thoughts, all your words, everything you had done, and also everything you failed to do.

I wonder what rating you would put in this film. If there was a film of my life, then there wouldn't be enough spaces on the cover for all the X's that it would need. You wouldn't find the film of my life in the family section, nor would you find it in the romance section.

[17 : 09] In fact, it would be found in the horror section. Would the film of your life be any different? Now, I am sure that just like me, there would be a load of scenes on that film that would be absolutely fine.

Acts of great kindness, moments of great joy, maybe celebrating your marriage, the birth of your children, or your grandchildren. children. But I am sure that just like me, there would be loads of scenes in that film that you would never want anyone to see.

You would never want anyone even to know about. Now, just imagine we've given a copy of the DVD of your life to those that are working on the sound desk.

And just in one minute's time, they're going to play the thing. I wonder what your reaction would be that if scenes from your life were about to be revealed, then I am sure that your reaction would be like that of Arthur Conan Doyle's friends.

That if all were to be revealed, you would flee. Right out of this church. Right out of this city. And right out of this country. Now, why would that be?

[18 : 18] Well, isn't that because you know you could not stand under the judgment of the good people here in the Tron church? Isn't that why you would flee? We know you could not, you know you could not stand under the judgment of folks here who incidentally have a DVD of their own lives that's just as bad or even worse than yours.

Now, if we could not stand under the judgment of folks like that, then why do we think we could stand under the judgment of a holy and a righteous God? Friends, if God marked our iniquities, who could stand?

Who could stand? Not the president, not the pope, not the prime minister, nor any of our policemen or any prisoners in our prisons, and certainly not a person in this building.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And friends, the psalmist knew this, and that is why the psalmist cries for mercy. Because verse 3 is about the real justice of God.

Real sin leads to real judgment. But that's the last thing the psalmist or any of us needs. Justice condemns the sinner. Justice is no use. I heard the story of a minister who was up at court for driving offences.

[19 : 35] He was speeding, doing 50 mile an hour in a 30 mile per hour zone. It wasn't me, but it could have been me. And the judge ruled he would be banned from driving.

He was going to lose his license. And the judge made an impassioned plea to the judge. He said, please do not revoke my license. I need the car for visiting the sick and the dying.

Please show mercy. And the judge just peered over his glasses and said, this court does not deal in mercy. This court deals in justice. Justice is the last thing the psalmist or any of us needs.

Because justice condemns the sinner. Justice is no use. We need mercy. Real sin leads to real judgment. But the psalmist also knows that in the real gospel there is real forgiveness.

Verse 4 But with you there is forgiveness. Friends, there are a lot of verses in the Bible that begin with a great but. But for me this is the best one.

[20 : 39] So I'm going to read it again. But with you there is forgiveness. Does that not bring great joy and relief to your heart this evening as it does to mine?

Not that there might be forgiveness or there could be forgiveness or there maybe be forgiveness. No. But that there is forgiveness. And the psalmist also knows the source of this forgiveness but with you not with me.

Thank God it's not with me. The source of this forgiveness is the Lord himself. God has done something not with me but with you. And I am sure as the psalmist walked about Jerusalem and the temple in particular he saw God's provision for sinners.

Lambs being borne sold and sacrificed on the altar of God. And what the psalmist saw in the temple was a foreshadow and a pointer to that great provision that God had made for sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Only by grace can we enter. Only by grace can we stand. Not by our human endeavor but by the blood of the Lamb but with you there is forgiveness.

[21 : 54] Friends, maybe there's someone here this evening who has never experienced the forgiveness of God. Maybe you think the depths of your sin are too deep or maybe you think there is a particular sin that you have committed either once or repeatedly that cannot be forgiven.

Well friend, if that's you, I would ask you to look at the last verse in the psalm. He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities. He himself will redeem Israel from all of their sins.

There is no sin that you, me, or anyone else can commit that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot deal with and bring us forgiveness. No matter how bad the record of your sin might be.

And that's exactly what the apostle Paul understood. Listen to what the apostle Paul writes in the letter to the Colossians. Has happened to the record of our sins.

Colossians 2 verse 13 And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, that is Jesus, having forgiven us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

[23 : 12] This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. The record of evidence against us has been cancelled in its entirety, totally forgiven.

It has not been swept under the carpet, friends. Cancelling the record of our debt has come at a great cost. It has been set aside, it has been nailed in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ to the cross.

He himself has redeemed us. Verse 8 But with you there is forgiveness. And the evidence of that forgiveness that you may be feared.

This may seem like a strange outcome of forgiveness, but in reality it is not. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Those who have been forgiven will want to live wisely in the fear of the Lord, which is in being in awe of his character and his works, and also being obedient to his commands.

The Lord Jesus Christ said, if you love me, you will obey my commands. But not only does the real gospel bring real forgiveness, the real gospel also brings real assurance.

[24 : 27] Verse 5 and 6 Charles Spurgeon said of these verses, the psalmist has come out of the depths of anguish to the heights of assurance. Well, where does this assurance come from?

Well, verse 5, I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope. His assurance comes from the Lord's word, Yahweh's word, the word of the promise-making, promise-keeping God.

This is where his assurance comes from, not from his own feelings, but in the facts of the word of God. Martin Luther, the great reformer, was asked, do you feel forgiven?

And Luther replied, no, but the word of God tells me that I am. And Luther would later write this poem, feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving.

My warrant is the word of God, nor else is worth believing. Though all my heart should feel condemned, for want of some sweet token, there is one greater than my heart, whose word cannot be broken.

[25 : 37] I'll trust in God's unchanging word, till soul and body sever, for though all things shall pass away, his word shall stand forever.

Friends, we can't trust in feelings, they go up and they go down, but just like Luther, we can trust the facts of the word of our God, for they never change. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

And again from Psalm 103, as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. His assurance in the word of the Lord now produces in him confident waiting.

Verse 6, my soul waits for the Lord more than watchman for the morning, more than watchman for the morning, watchman on the city walls would long for a new day to dawn.

When the new day would dawn, they would rejoice, knowing that the city has been kept safe for another night. The Psalmist is saying here, I am confidently waiting. The night may not be over yet, but the Lord will be faithful to his promises.

[26 : 47] I am in this for the long haul. The morning will come. The Lord will come and deliver fully and finally. The Psalmist now assured the forgiveness, and assured by the word of God, knows that the coming of the Lord to redeem him is more reliable than the coming of the morning.

Needing the mercy of God, knowing the mercy of God, and thirdly, verse 7 and 8, sharing the mercy of God. Verse 7, O Israel, O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him there is plentiful redemption.

There is a great contrast in tone between verse 1 and verse 7. The Psalmist has gone from being a penitent prayer to a passionate preacher. When you need and you know God's mercy, you can't keep it to yourself.

You've got to share it. In his first cry, the Psalmist was only interested in himself and God, but now, now his interest extends to others. The Psalmist is no longer sunk in his own situation.

He has good news and he has got to share it. O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with him there is steadfast love. With the Lord there is hesed, the covenant of a faithful God.

[28 : 12] His love is steadfast even to those who are rebellious. And with him is plentiful redemption. This is the God of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, the God who was generous and abundant in creation.

He is plentiful and generous in redemption. The generosity of God's love and redemption is far greater than all other sins. Friends, I wonder if you noticed two things about the Psalmist preaching.

Firstly, he is preaching to us to put our hope only in the Lord. For only with the Lord is there forgiveness. Verse 4. Only with the Lord is there steadfast love.

Verse 7. And only with the Lord is there plentiful redemption. Verse 7. The second thing about his preaching is this. He is preaching only to Israel.

Verse 7. O Israel, hope in the Lord. And verse 8. He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities. Well, if this is only for Israel, who then is Israel?

[29 : 22] Does this mean that all of us here this evening have no hope of these things? If we are not Jewish, who then is Israel? Well, in the Psalmist day, Israel were an ethnic people.

But remember, foreigners or non-Israelites could force their way in. Remember, Rahab the prostitute, Ruth the Moabite, or Naaman the Syrian? That's the way it always was.

But what about today? Well, today there is no need to force your way in to the people of God. No. Apostle Paul writes in Galatians chapter 3 verse 28 and 29.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

So who are Israel today? Well, according to the Apostle Paul, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

[30 : 28] So friends, there's a question for us to ask ourselves this evening. Do I belong to Christ? Do I belong to the Tron Church or any other church for that matter?

But do I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, if you do, there is forgiveness for you. If you do, there is unfail, steadfast love for you.

If you do, there is full and plentiful redemption for you. Are you here this evening, friend, and you don't yet belong to the Lord Jesus Christ? Christ, then can I urge you that before you leave this place this evening, that you would look and learn from the words and the experience of the psalmist, and that you would cry to the Lord Jesus Christ about your sin.

A cry is all that is needed, friend, but it is to the Lord Jesus Christ alone that you must cry. And what better opportunity than now, as we come to communion and the Lord's table, the Lord Jesus Christ invites sinners to come.

As you eat the bread and suck the wine, may you know and may you experience and taste that indeed, with the Lord, there is forgiveness.

[31 : 49] Let us pray together. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man, someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you that with you there is forgiveness. We thank you for the indescribable gift of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.