



MONDAY 21 MAR 2016

SERIES: EASTER WEEK

Read: Psalm 113

Plug In...

We press pause on the Gospel of Matthew at The Lakes this week to spend the week getting ready to reflect on Easter.

Jews from before the time of Jesus sang a group of Psalms at Passover (Pss. 113-118). These Psalms are called the 'Hallel' (Hebrew for 'praise' –where we get the word "hallelujah" from). Matthew 26:30 (cf. Mark 14:26) mention that Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before going out to the Mount of Olives. Given they had just celebrated the Passover they were singing the final psalm from this group sung throughout the Passover meal.

The first psalm sung, Psalm 113, at verse 7 reminds us of Jesus' first beatitude (Matt. 5:3).

Chew It Over...

Reflect on how Jesus said "blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" and yet he became poor and placed himself low in the dust for us. Reflect on what this psalm says God will do and how significant this would have been for Jesus as he sung it at the beginning of the Last Supper.

Prayer Suggestion

[Praise God for raising and lifting Jesus up from the ash heap and installing him on the seat of princes. Hallelujah (Praise the LORD) that Jesus shares this blessing with us.



TUESDAY 22 MAR 2016

SERIES: EASTER WEEK

Read: Psalm 114

Plug In...

This Passover psalm looks at God's rescue of the Israelites from Egypt and how He sustained them so they enter the Promised Land across the Jordan. That space is God's sanctuary, where his temple was, where God's people dwelt with God.

Chew It Over...

Consider the context Jesus would have sung this psalm in. The night of his arrest, Jesus is fully aware of his impending death (Matt. 20:17-19). You could only sing this psalm within such circumstances if you were again confident that the created world will reel back at the action of the creator God.

Have you grasped this too? Do you know this enough that you too can personify the world and ask rhetorical questions: what can the world do to me?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank Jesus for his unwavering faith in God, the faith that enabled him to complete our rescue and salvation even when the world was against him. Ask Jesus to impart the same confidence to you as you stare at a world trying to rise against you.



WEDNESDAY 23 MAR 2016

SERIES: EASTER WEEK

Read: Psalm 115

Plug In...

This psalm would have been sung at some point during the Passover meal of Jesus and the disciples. V.2 recalls when the pagan nations around Israel once had opportunity to look on, see Israel's sorry state, and easily have ammunition to start sledging: "where is your God?"

A few hours after singing this psalm, Jesus hung on a cross where some of the people of Israel (leaders) began sledging Jesus in a similar way: "He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him" (Matt. 27:41-43).

Chew It Over...

Reflect on how Christians can often look in a sorry state and how it brings out the slurs. Is there a line from this psalm that breathes confidence back into you that God has the last word?

Prayer Suggestion

After reflecting on a real situation where you cop it for being a Christian, pray verse 1 as a confident plea for God to save you.



THURSDAY 24 MAR 2016

SERIES: EASTER WEEK

Read: Psalm 116

Plug In...

Tradition has it that at Passover Jewish people would have four cups of wine throughout the night. 1. Cup of Sanctification (where they acknowledge God had chosen Israel to be a special people); 2. Cup of Deliverance (remembers that God had to deliver the people from idolatry to give them this status); 3. Cup of Redemption/Salvation (this cup goes by both titles and was a moment to remember that the deliverance came via God making a payment to redeem His firstborn son Israel); 4. The Cup of Hope (acknowledges that the people are living by faith now waiting for the full reality to emerge in the future – just like they would have on the first Passover night).

Psalm 116 is a man who has been saved from death and now says he lifts up the cup God has given him to drink, the cup of salvation (v.15).

It is likely that when Jesus takes the cup at the Last Supper he taking the third cup of wine during the Passover and goes on to explain that he gives himself as the gift of salvation, his very blood as the redemption price (Matt. 26:27-28).

[NB: Matt. 26:29 – It is quite possible that Jesus didn't drink the fourth cup of the traditional Passover, but references it as one which will be drunk with his people in his Father's kingdom].

Chew It Over...

How celebratory are we at Easter. Look how fully aware the man in this psalm is of his salvation. How can we not celebrate what Jesus has done for us? How can we not do it publicly like the man in this psalm does? How can it be that the “long weekend” is what so easily dominates our attention at this time?

Prayer Suggestion

May the LORD cause us to publicly proclaim His name, and His salvation at this time.
May the LORD makes us truly Jesus’ servants as we live out lives completely shaped by our consciousness that Jesus turned his ear to our cry for mercy.



FRIDAY 25 MAR 2016

SERIES: EASTER WEEK

Read: Psalm 117

Plug In...

This psalm addresses the whole world. First sung at Passover it acknowledges that God saved Israel to be a blessing to all people across the world (*cf.* Gen. 12:1-3).

The Passover of the Last Supper has Jesus transpose the Passover elements to now point to what God is doing through Jesus to redeem all peoples of the world. This psalm traditionally sung at the Passover comes to fulfillment with the work Jesus did.

Chew It Over...

Paul quotes this super short psalm as he encourages Christians to accept one another just like Jesus accepted us (Romans 15:5-13). Think about how attending The Lakes today on Good Friday and then on Easter Sunday is no inconsequential thing. Think on how this psalm has significance and resonance with us only because of the first Easter.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray the "May the God..." prayers of Paul now within which he quotes Ps. 117.

[Romans 15:5-13].



WEEKEND 26-27 MAR 2016

SERIES: EASTER WEEK

Read: Psalm 118

Plug In...

This psalm depicts a man who has had distress; a close to death experience like Ps. 116. In this psalm the person is clearly a king. A king in distress who called out to God and God proved to be his salvation (Ps. 118:4).

This is the psalm the people used lines from when calling out to Jesus as he entered Jerusalem the week before his death (Matt. 21:9). This is the final psalm sung at Passover. It most likely was the one Jesus sung with his disciples before heading out to the Mount of Olives where his distress began (Matt. 26:30).

Chew It Over...

This Easter day of salvation extends across our whole Christian life. Are you rejoicing in it? V.27 shows the people conducted a festival with their gifts and thanks toward God as a response to His salvation. What are you doing today that marks your unrestricted joy and entire thanks that God is your God? How will you exalt Him?

Prayer Suggestion

Help us Lord Jesus to rejoice in this day you have made. May we be glad in it. You are our God and we will give you thanks.