

## Psalm 130 – God and my sin

Today is my last sermon in the Psalms series  
Next Sunday Travis Moroney will be continuing with the much-loved Psalm 23  
And after that, Clinton will be continuing our series in the Psalms  
Today we will be looking at Psalm 130  
One of my favourite psalms  
It's been categorised as one of the seven penitential psalms  
Psalms that are often to do with lamenting over sin  
As you can see in the heading  
It was also one of 15 songs of ascent  
These Psalms were sung during the pilgrimage to Jerusalem on certain festivals throughout the year  
As the worshippers climbed to the temple mount they sang these Psalms

Before we look at Psalm 130 let's pray

I subscribe to a YouTube channel called "Team Fearless"  
And it's basically full of self-motivational videos  
And to be honest I'm subscribed just to see the Thumbnails  
Let me share a few with you  
Here's one

"I walk alone I'm okay on my own"

Here's another one

"Only those who dare to fight for a great life have the chance to live a great life"

Or

"If they tell you 99% fail, don't lose faith believe you are in the 1%"

And when you click on one of these videos  
You get inspirational the background music  
And then you get someone shouting stuff at you  
Like a coach slapping you on the face and telling you to get back in the boxing ring called life  
And it's incredibly popular with 3.8 million subscribers  
Which tells me that lots of people are looking for answers when they face failure and disappointment in life  
At some point all of us are going to reach a point  
Where we say "I've really made a mess of my life"  
"I've made a mess of my relationships with others"  
"I've made a mess of my relationship with God"  
And I need to do something about it

There will also be times when you are on the receiving end of someone else's mess  
Be that a spouse, a business partner, a parent, a sibling, a friend  
When you are in *your* mess  
Or put in someone else's mess  
What do you do?

Team Fearless will tell you that the answer lies in yourself.  
Don't give up  
You've just got to look within  
You've just got to try harder  
You've got to overcome until you achieve your dreams

What do you think about that approach?

From my observation from those I meet  
I don't think it works  
I see a lot of people living out this slogan instead

"Fake it til you make it"

Where you can't admit weakness and failure  
Where you can't say sorry  
Where you just have to pretend you've got it all together  
Where you're scared of others knowing that it's all smoke and mirrors  
And just hope that somehow everything in your life will improve  
There's got to be a better way.

And there is  
Psalm 130 presents another way  
A better way when you're facing the mess  
This week I had one of those God moments  
I was meeting with someone from church and at their house they had this sign  
As a reminder to the members of their family  
It was a God moment  
Because I was just thinking about Psalm 130  
And then God showed me this  
So I took a photo of it to share with you  
Forget the Team Fearless slogans  
Remember this one

"Your grace abounds in deepest waters"

Because this is what Psalm 130 is all about  
We're going to look at four things today in the Psalm

1. **Out of the depths**
2. **Who could stand?**
3. **I wait for the Lord**
4. **Put your hope in**

### **Firstly, out of the depths**

Verse 1

<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths I call to you, Lord!

<sup>2</sup>Lord, listen to my voice;  
let your ears be attentive  
to my cry for help.

We saw last week in Psalm 88  
That God welcomes our cries of utter despair  
And as we're going to see in the next section  
The Psalmist is in this place of crying out to God because of his own sin  
The ocean for the Israelites was a place of chaos and judgement  
And the Psalmist is drowning in the ocean depths of his own sin

This reminds us of Jonah the prophet  
When God told Jonah to preach to the Ninevites his sworn enemy  
Jonah disobeyed God and ran in the opposite direction

And eventually he finds himself literally hurled into the ocean  
In the belly of a fish calling to the Lord

Jonah 2

<sup>1</sup>Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish: <sup>2</sup>I called to the Lord in my distress, and he answered me. I cried out for help from deep inside Sheol; you heard my voice.

<sup>3</sup>When you threw me into the depths, into the heart of the seas, the current overcame me.

Jonah is quite literally in the depths of the ocean  
But he is also drowning in the depths of his own sin  
This is where he ended up when he rejected God's word over his life.

I wonder if you have ever felt like Jonah,  
Like the Psalmist, drowning in the ocean of your own sin.  
I wonder if you've felt the stain of shame  
Each time after looking at porn  
I wonder if you've felt the weight of guilt  
Each time you've yelled at your partner, your children with uncontrollable rage  
Maybe you've tried to bury the feelings  
But it's still there eating away at you?  
Or maybe you're earnestly trying to live a good life  
But the more you try  
The more acutely aware you are of every sin big or small  
And so in the end  
What you feel is this immense distance between you and God  
You feel that you are in the depths

Martin Luther, the famous reformer of the church  
Loved the penitential psalms, including Psalm 130  
Because they offered him the hope of God's grace  
Before he understood the gospel of Christ  
Martin Luther was a devout Catholic monk who tried his very best to please God on His own efforts  
And this is what he wrote  
"Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely  
disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction"

Luther was drowning in His sin  
And nothing he did on his own efforts  
Could save Him from the condemnation of God

If you can relate to Luther's words  
I want you to hear this from Psalm 130

There is no depth too far from God  
Where he will not hear your cries for mercy  
Why?  
Because God's grace abounds in deepest waters  
This is good news for the 99% of us who fail

Here's the second point

**Who could stand?**

Verse 3

<sup>3</sup>Lord, if you kept an account of iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?

<sup>4</sup> But with you there is forgiveness,  
so that you may be revered.

The Bible uses a number of different words to shed light on how terrible our sin is  
Iniquity is pre-meditated, ongoing sin  
The psalms talk about transgression, another word for sin  
Where you knowingly disobey something God forbids  
Sin also means missing the mark,  
Falling short of God's standard  
Whatever it is,  
When it comes to standing before a Holy God  
None of us can claim innocence  
Each one of us is guilty of transgression, of iniquity, of sin.

Over the years that I've been conducting funerals  
I've noticed that it has become standard practice  
To show a memorial tribute video of the person who has died  
It's usually about 3-4 minutes long  
Composed of meaningful photos of each stage of that person's life with their loved ones  
I'm sure that if you've attended a funeral you've seen one of these tributes  
They are often very moving

Now I want you to imagine that at your death  
After that video is shown of your life  
There's another video shown  
This time it's an account of all your sin  
Every skeleton in your closet that you've kept hidden from others  
All the sinful words that you've used to destroy others  
All the acts of transgression and iniquity you've ever committed  
All the good things you neglected to do because of your selfishness  
Up there on the screen for everyone to see  
I would be horrified if you saw that video of my life  
I mean even as a sinner before fellow sinners  
I would not be able to handle that  
But even worse than that, imagine a holy God seeing that video  
None of us could stand up to that account before God  
Apart from the shame we would all feel  
We would all stand guilty as charged  
Rightly condemned for what we have done

And you see the thing is  
God could make that video and show it  
Because he sees it all  
He could well hold it against us  
But that's not what He's like

In Luke 15, Jesus tells the parable of the lost son to show what God is like  
In fact this parable should be called the compassionate father  
Because the high point of this parable is the father  
After this wilful son had sinned against the father so terribly  
This is what happens when he decides to go home after reaching the depths of his sin

<sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.  
"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him..."

<sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

I want you to imagine a middle eastern man  
Trying to run in his long tunic  
Losing all his dignity as he stumbles because he's trying to run as fast as he can  
But he doesn't care  
Because all he can think of  
Is embracing the son whom he thought was dead  
That is what God is like  
Compassionate and gracious  
Slow to anger  
Abounding in love  
Quick to forgive  
He does not treat us as our sins deserve  
This is God's amazing, undeserved grace  
Grace that abounds in deepest waters

And this grace has a purpose  
Look at verse 4 of Psalm 130  
<sup>4</sup> But with you there is forgiveness,  
so that you may be revered.

That word revered means to stand in awe of  
Or in many of the English translations it's actually translated as "fear"  
That is not normally how we might think about the result of forgiveness  
That we might *fear* God  
So we need to unpack this some more

In the hymn Amazing Grace  
John Newton puts it very well  
"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear"  
"And grace my fears relieved"

God's grace both teaches us to fear Him  
And relieves our fears of Him at the same time

There is forgiveness with God  
But it's not a cheap forgiveness  
It comes at an immense cost to the Father  
And so we should not take this lightly  
We should stand in awe of God  
We should fear God appropriately in our ongoing relationship with Him  
We should not take His grace for granted  
By living a life of deliberate, ongoing sin  
So grace teaches us how to fear God  
But to God we are not nameless servants who lives in fear of harsh rebuke  
We are His children whom he has compassionately embraced  
So God's grace relieves such fear of punishment

If you've really understood the Christian gospel  
If you've understood how God's forgiveness should work in your life  
Then you will understand how grace results in these two things  
I fear God  
And at the same time – I don't fear God  
I fear my Holy God and don't want to sin

But He's my compassionate Father so I don't fear him

If you're not sure you get this  
Then follow this up with me or one of the other pastors after the service

### **Here's the third section**

#### **I wait for the Lord**

Verse 5

<sup>5</sup> I wait for the Lord; I wait  
and put my hope in his word.

<sup>6</sup> I wait for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning—  
more than watchmen for the morning.

I call them restless souls  
People who are busy trying to find their own solutions to the mess  
Often motivated by this sense that they are disappointing someone  
Themselves, others, God  
Or trying to justify their existence in some way  
And you can tell who they are  
Because even when they sit still  
There's a hundred things churning away in their heads  
So busy, So tired  
And it's not just physical tiredness  
It's a tiredness of the soul  
Restless, not at peace  
I can identify restless souls because I see that restlessness in myself  
My experience of burnout has shown up problems with my thinking  
I like self-reliance  
I'm busy  
I do before I pray  
I find rest difficult  
Can you relate to this?  
The solution to a restless soul  
In verse 5 is to wait for the Lord  
To put your hope in his word

How long did Abraham have to wait for God to fulfil his promise to give him a son  
25 years

Did Abraham and Sarah do a good job of waiting?  
No.

They were busy trying to find their own solution  
Remember Hagar and Ishmael  
And they made an absolute mess of that situation  
What Abraham and Sarah should have done  
Was to trust God to keep His promise  
And eventually God delivered on His promise when Isaac was born

How long between the end of the Old Testament and the start of the New Testament

400 years  
400 years of silence from God  
But 400 years for God's people to wait upon His promises  
And God delivered on His promise when Jesus came

The usual options for the restless are usually these:

Busy distraction

Self-atonement

Blame shifting

The ends justifying the means

And none of these things work

In fact they usually cause more sin

The restless find waiting so passive

But biblical waiting is not passive

It's active waiting.

Look at the analogy in verse 6

Like watchmen waiting for the morning

I want you to imagine the soldiers posted on the city walls for night duty

This is the hardest time to defend the city

Because stealth attacks are most likely to happen at night

And so they long for the light of the morning

The know dawn is coming

But until then they actively watch and wait

For us to actively wait on the Lord

We take guard by turning to the bible to keep listening to God

if we are to defend against attack we need to cling to God's promises

Prayer is another active defence for a restless soul

We yield control to God when we pray

We say to God "You know best and I do not"

And when we yield control

What we find is that God will give us a peace that surpasses all understanding

We seek God as we wait on Him

We grow in our love for Him, our dependence and our worship of Him

For the believer,

So much of life is waiting on the Lord

Waiting with a chronic health condition without giving into bitterness

Waiting for God to bring change in a difficult husband

because you've tried to change him and that doesn't work

Waiting for children to finish walking a rebellious path instead of resenting them

Waiting for God to bring a suitable marriage partner without stumbling into sin

We find it so hard to wait don't we?

We need to make a 5-year plans

We need to force change

We need to set the agenda

And so often we make an even greater sinful mess

The final section is **Put your hope in the Lord**

Verse 7

<sup>7</sup> Israel, put your hope in the Lord.

For there is faithful love with the Lord,

and with him is redemption in abundance.

<sup>8</sup> And he will redeem Israel

from all its iniquities.

Redemption in the Bible is the language of freeing someone from slavery

In the cultures of the bible

To redeem someone you paid a price for their freedom  
The bible is clear that our sin enslaves us  
And the law of God cannot save us  
It only points out our guilt  
Self-reliance doesn't work  
Because sin demands a price that we cannot pay  
We need a redeemer who will pay the price  
A redeemer who will break the chains of sin and death  
And God has sent such a Saviour  
Even the psalmist did not know Him but we do

The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 1

<sup>7</sup> In him [that is Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding.

At the cross, Christ paid the price with His blood  
At the cross, our redemption was secured  
Sins can be forgiven  
Our slavery to sin and death broken  
And there you see that word – grace  
The riches of his grace  
Grace that came to us  
Not when we scrubbed ourselves up to be good people  
But Grace that met us at our very worst as sinners  
Because God's grace abounds in deepest waters.

The Psalmist has one final thing to say  
And this time it's not a prayer *to* God  
It's an appeal to his people  
And I want you to see how far he's travelled  
He went from the desperate cries of a drowning man  
To a man who is now standing on the rock of his salvation  
With lungs full of air he is now proclaiming to anyone who will listen  
Put your hope in yourself  
No!  
Put your hope *in the Lord*  
Put your hope in the one who loves sinners  
Put your hope in the one who has rescued this drowning soul  
Put your hope in the one who sets captives free from guilt and shame  
Put your hope in the one who will give you joy and peace and confidence  
Put your hope in the Lord who will never leave you or forsake you  
Where will you put your hope?

In last week's sermon in Psalm 88  
I encouraged you to be real in sharing about suffering and grief with each other  
And someone encouraged me to do the same this week but to talk about  
What it might look like to confess sin to each other.  
In the New Testament, James talks about confessing sin to each other  
And the book of Galatians also talks about restoring a fellow believer who is caught in sin  
And I might just take the opportunity to share with you about what I do in that situation.

I'm going to go through this list of things that if someone shares with me about their sin  
Firstly, don't be surprised by their sin  
Sometimes we're surprised because that sin is not our particular struggle



But the reality is, all of us are capable of any sin  
Even someone you think is above *that* sin  
So don't be surprised  
Secondly, really listen  
Same as last week  
Don't interrupt  
But give them an opportunity to confess their sins  
Also you don't need to ask about every detail of their sin as it may be unhelpful for you and for them  
After this, thank them for sharing with you  
Because it's probably required a great deal of courage for them to be vulnerable  
After they have shared I normally read Psalm 51  
This is another penitential psalm  
It's the one that David wrote after his sin of adultery and murder was exposed by the prophet Nathan  
I read this one because it shows them that even people like King David  
sinned terribly against God and others  
Psalm 51 also conveys the weight of our sin against God  
It also paints a picture of what repentance looks like – when you feel bad for God  
And not just bad for yourself  
Psalm 51 also expresses a desire to be made clean by God  
Then I pray with them but more importantly I encourage them to pray after I pray  
Remember what the Psalmist here in Psalm 130 is saying  
Put your hope in the Lord  
By getting the person to pray  
I am saying that yes it's a good thing to confess to someone  
But ultimately you need to confess to God  
Put your hope in Him,  
Cry out to Him for mercy from the depths  
He is the only one who can forgive your sin and wash your guilt away through the cross of Christ  
After they have prayed

I then read 1 John 1:9 with them

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

And I say that this is only possible because of Jesus  
God is just and will punish your sin on Jesus  
But he is faithful to his promise to forgive and will show you mercy because of Jesus  
I say that they may not feel different  
But they need to trust in the promise of this verse  
That God will forgive them when they confess their sin to him  
Then I ask them what they are going to do differently next time  
Repentance is a change of direction in the way you think and live  
And not repeating the same sins over and over again  
If you want to follow up on this list, please speak to me after the service.

If you talk to someone who shares with you that they are in a mess because of someone else's sin  
Then I will refer you to last week's sermon  
Listen to them  
Grieve with them  
And cry out to God with them

The clip I showed you at the start was from the movie *Amazing Grace*  
Based on the true story of the campaign by William Wilberforce to abolish slavery  
Through the British Parliament

A mentor to William Wilberforce was John Newton  
The author of perhaps the most well-known Christian hymn "Amazing Grace"  
A song that is about the depths of his own sin and God's grace shown to him  
Newton became a sailor at age 11  
He was forced to join the Royal Navy at 18 where he was flogged with 96 lashes for attempting to desert  
He was then forced into slavery at aged 20 in West Africa serving other slaves  
He was rescued at age 23  
And on his return voyage to England  
Newton was caught up in a massive storm where he thought he was going to die  
He cried out to God for mercy and eventually the storm died down  
From this point, it began Newton's journey towards Christ  
He continued to work as a captain of slave ships until the age of 29 when he suffered a stroke  
From the age of 30, Newton became very serious about studying the bible  
And eventually 7 years later he became an Anglican minister.  
At age 63 he wrote a pamphlet called "thoughts upon the slave trade"  
In which he described the horrific conditions of the slave ships  
And he apologised for a confession which comes too late, he said  
"It will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me  
That I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders"  
He had copies of this pamphlet sent to every member of the British Parliament  
Newton lived to see the abolition of the slave trade the year that he died aged 82  
In his old aged he is quoted as saying  
"Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly:  
I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Saviour."  
Newton wrote his own epitaph which is on his gravestone in Olney, the church where he pastored:

JOHN NEWTON. Clerk.

Once an infidel and libertine a servant of slaves in Africa was by the rich mercy of our LORD and SAVIOUR  
JESUS CHRIST preserved, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the faith he had long laboured to  
destroy.

God's grace abounds in deepest waters.

Let's pray.