

Psalm 130

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;
² Lord, hear my voice.
 Let your ears be attentive
 to my cry for mercy.
³ If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
 Lord, who could stand?
⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
 so that we can, with reverence, serve you.
⁵ I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
 and in his word I put my hope.
⁶ I wait for the Lord
 more than watchmen wait for the
 morning,
 more than watchmen wait for the
 morning.
⁷ Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
 for with the LORD is unfailing love
 and with him is full redemption.
⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
 from all their sins.

Mark 5; 21-43

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. ²³ He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

³¹ "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?' "

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

³⁶ Overhearing^[a] what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum!*" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, our strength, and our redeemer.

I am going to start this sermon with a quote from Psalm 46 – "*God is our strength and refuge, our perfect help in trouble.*"

These are words of assurance and comfort, something we all need many times in our lives. How many times only we, ourselves, know and God knows. There will have been many times in our lives we have been in the depths of deep despair and we have not spoken of it, keeping quiet about it for reasons again only known to ourselves and to God.

Despair has been part of the human condition since Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden. It will be part of the lives of humankind until Jesus returns. Sadly, for many, despair will continue for those who have not accepted Jesus into their lives. Jesus' words, reported in John 14:6 – "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*"

No one knows for certain who wrote Psalm 130. It has been suggested that it was Hezekiah who became king in Jerusalem in 716BC and reigned until 687BC, a period of 29 years, from the age of 25 until he was 54. He was a good king, purifying the temple and ridding Judah of idolatry, resuming the celebration of the Passover, and encouraging the scattered tribes of Israel to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. Yet, about 700BC he became very ill, and Psalm 130 is said to be his plea. At this time Isaiah sent Hezekiah a message about putting his house in order. It has been suggested that Hezekiah was suffering from a boil. Boils can be painful, depending on where they are, however the tone of Psalm 130 seems to be a little extreme for that malady.

Psalm 130 is a cry in the face of deep despair. The writer was in a state deep hopelessness. He must have committed a deep sin to feel so hopeless, so isolated and so far from God, far more so from a boil. It is a penitential psalm, one of seven such psalms. The others are Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102 and 143.

The writer of Psalm 130 was feeling deep guilt. We hear that in his first words –*“Out of the depths I cry to you.”* We are not told what the sin was. That does not matter. It was known to God for nothing is hidden from Him.

Psalm 130 is a psalm of confession. It is also a psalm of trust – that God will hear his plea and respond. We who follow Jesus Christ understand the need, and importance, of confession. It is an acknowledgement before God that we have sinned and are repentant. God will hear us, and He will forgive us. As we read in Psalm 103:12 –

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.”

The writer acknowledges this in verses 3 and 4 –

*³ If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*

Another aspect of this psalm that we should note is the willingness of the writer to wait on God. Patience is not a virtue of most people, especially in the world today. We are encouraged to want everything now! We see this in the media. Why wait, we are told. Buy now, pay later.

God waits. He waits to see if we are truly repentant. We read in John’s Gospel about the woman caught in adultery. When all her accusers had disappeared, Jesus said to her, *“Go and sin no more.”*

But sin can be persuasive and as Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5:8 –

“Your enemy, the devil, like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour.”

However, God is love, unfailing love, and redemption comes through Him. It came through God several hundred years later, when a child was born in Bethlehem, a child begotten by the Holy Spirit and conceived by Mary. Called Emmanuel, and known to us as Jesus, He grew to become an adult and became the redemption of the world, if only people believe. Israel was redeemed as is all humankind who accept Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Can you imagine that crowd in Jerusalem on that day we read about in Mark 5: 21 -43?

Here was a man, unknown except for those among whom He grew up, now followed by crowds wherever He went in Palestine, all intent on seeing Him, hearing Him, watching His miracles. A noisy bunch of people, no doubt pushing and shoving to get closer.

We see something of the sort in the adulation of football players, movie stars and other entertainers. I can recall the time that the Beatles came to Australia in 1962 and the screaming crowds outside the Southern Cross Hotel. I watched it on television.

Back to Jerusalem 2000 years ago.

There is a woman among the crowd. She had been ill for twelve years with a bleeding illness, an incurable illness. She would have been considered unclean and forced to live an isolated life, probably begging to stay alive. People would have moved around her in a way to avoid contact.

Let us try to imagine her progress in that crowd. Perhaps she was bent over because of pain. Perhaps she was being pushed away. Perhaps there were curses aimed at her.

Yet, she continued her struggle to reach Jesus. Her mind was focussed only on reaching Him. We need that intensity of focus in ourselves. Finally, the woman reached her goal which was to touch His clothes. She did so. No doubt she thought that Jesus would not know. She was wrong. He did so for power drained out of Him. It may not have been much, but He knew.

Turning Jesus asked, *"Who touched my clothes?"*

No one could tell Him.

Can you imagine how the woman felt?

She knew she had been cured however she had known rejection and contempt for twelve years. Overcoming her fear, she fell at Jesus' feet and confessed. Perhaps she felt she might be punished. After all she had been the object of rejection and contempt for so long.

Then came the words,

"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

The woman did not call out to God. In hope and in faith she reached out to Jesus.

This matter with the woman was a distraction. Jesus had been sought by Jairus whose daughter was ill and dying. He was, no doubt, walking beside Jesus, guiding Him to where the child lay ill. Then had come the bleeding woman.

Jairus, being human and a loving father in despair, must have been angry at the woman. He wanted Jesus to tend his daughter, not a woman outcast because of her illness.

Then, while Jesus was talking with the woman, word came to them,

“Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

There is no kindness or compassion in these words. They are cold. Jairus was the synagogue leader. He must have been respected yet there is no gentleness in the words. Were they spoken by people who were against Jesus? It is hard to say as He was called the teacher.

But Jesus overheard and spoke words of reassurance, adding that Jairus should *“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”*

These are words that we should all recall. *“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”*

There have been many dark times in the history of the world since Jesus walked among humankind. There are dark times now with COVID. There is fear and anger across the world.

And why not? COVID is a fearsome thing.

But here are other fearsome things going on about us as our faith and our beliefs are being challenged and threatened. We are being seen as the bad guys because we believe in Jesus and the world is saying that we should not believe.

We need to remember what Jesus said at all times - *“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”*

Now back to Jairus – it is clear that he believed Jesus. He did not say to Jesus. “Come no further. There is no point. My daughter is dead.” He must have been hurting deep inside yet, he believed Jesus.

Now, did you notice somethings in the text that is quite interesting? He went on with only Peter, James and John, the brother of James. John who would write the Gospel, three letters and Revelation. Somehow Jesus stooped the crowd and the nine others who made up His inner circle. Why these three men?

These were the three men who Jesus took with Him to Mount Tabor where He was transfigured and He met Elijah and Moses and then a voice came from a cloud, *“This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!”*

Jesus had clearly chosen Peter, James and John for that revelation for He was about to show them something very significant with the child.

Now it was the custom in those days, and still is in that part of the world, that when a death came, there would be loud wailing and weeping and so it was. Some were also professional

mourners who would have been paid. These lamentations would have been choral singing and there would have been clapping of hands.

Jesus had dismissed one crowd and was now confronted by another. Entering the house. He contradicts the mourners.

“She is not dead but asleep,” He says and receives only laughter.

Somehow Jesus gets them all to leave, all but the girl’s parents and the three disciples. They go into the room where the girl lay. Jesus takes her hand and speaks, *“Little girl, I say to you, get up.”*

She does. She not only wakens but begins to walk around.

The child was in a comatose sleep, a sleep so deep and so devoid of movement, that it seems that a person has died.

There was complete amazement among the five people watching. They had seen something that to their eyes was a miracle. It was a miracle in those days when medical knowledge was so limited.

Yet an even greater miracle was ahead. It was a miracle that would change the history of the world and of humankind. It would give the world that death does not have to be the end – if we believe in and accept Jesus into our lives.

We do not have to fear. We just have to believe in Jesus and follow His teachings.

As the seventh and eighth verses of Psalm 130 state:

*⁷ Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.*

*⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.*

We are Israel, we who follow Jesus.

I will end in prayer.

*O God our defender.
Storms rage about us and cause us to be afraid:
Rescue your people from despair;
Deliver your sons and daughters from fear,
And preserve us all from unbelief,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever,
Amen.*