

Psalm 118
The Resurrection of Jesus

Psalm 118:22-24

²² The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone;

²³ the LORD has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Introduction

In the name of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ who is our hope and our joy; in whom is our life:

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

People will often say this Sunday is the biggest day for Christians the world over. Actually that's not really true.

This day is the most important of days for the entire Universe.

When God raised Jesus Christ from the dead the very foundations of the world changed for all time. When God raised Jesus Christ from the dead he unleashed upon the world salvation: a salvation of utter durability and power, strong enough to reach into the darkest corners of our world, to enter into the darkest places of our lives to deliver us.

Nothing could ever be the same again. Nothing has been.

I want use three verses from the Psalm we read together: Psalm 118, to think about this glorious day. A Psalm that celebrates a victory over a stubborn enemy, the author looks to God and praises him for delivering them.

But it is also a psalm that points to Jesus Christ and the mighty victory which God won through Jesus. Not a victory over a military power, but over sin and death.

I want to look at just three verses: 22, 23 and 24.

A Stunning Reversal

22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone

The psalm gives us a visual image: a building being constructed of stone; we a stone that has been rejected by the builders as unusable. Yet that stone becomes the capstone or the cornerstone. A capstone would be a large stone used as lintel over a door, supporting everything above; or a cornerstone which would anchor the corner of the building. A stone that is essential to supporting the entire edifice.

This stone has undergone a stunning reversal: once regarded as useless it is now the foundation of the building. This is an image of Jesus Christ. It runs through the Scriptures and describes how he was rejected by the religious leaders and the crowd in Jerusalem, yet became a figure of central importance. He is the cornerstone which anchors the building.

And the thing that Jesus is central to is salvation. He was rejected and hung on a cross: but God raised him from death and brought him, body and soul into everlasting life. It is not that Jesus revived in some way. It is not just that Jesus went to heaven as isn't that nice?

The point of Easter is that Jesus died the death we die. Yet because he offered his perfect, obedient life as a sacrifice for our sins, God saved him death and brought him into eternal life; a life of perfection; a durable life that will never end. The life that was meant to be ours, all along. And can be once again.

Jesus is the cornerstone of salvation. Your salvation and my salvation. God imparts eternal life upon you and me in the name of Jesus Christ. Because of what he has done, we can know in our lives the power of God at work in us, saving us from death for life.

That is why in a sermon the Apostle Peter, speaking to the people in Jerusalem who had Jesus killed says:

Acts 4.10-12: ... Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead... he is the stone you builders rejected which has become the capstone;

Then he goes on to say: salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to humankind by which we must be saved.

Jesus goes through a stunning reversal he is the central pillar in the drama that is salvation in whom is salvation. That is why we come to him for life *the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*. But second:

The Divine Action

23 The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes

The writer of the Psalm is speaking in the first instance of a mighty victory against a stubborn enemy. He could not have known that in praising God for deliverance from a much greater enemy which is sin and death. A victory not won by horses and chariots, but on a cross and in a tomb. Yet, he recognizes that his victory was God's doing. He stands back and surveys what God has done and says: this is amazing.

And that is Easter Day. We celebrate God's mighty victory over the forces of darkness which control human life; we celebrate God's victory over sin and death, fearsome enemies that mar human lives.

Because of what God has done in Jesus Christ our lives can take on a different quality. It affects us now and for eternity.

You can make that victory yours by coming to Jesus Christ.

We no longer need to live enslaved to our sinful nature which drags us down. Alienation does not need to mark our relationships. We do not need to live out our lives driven by greed to consume more, or driven by fear that we won't succeed and achieve all that we want.

We can live our lives secure knowing that we have a relationship with God. We can live out our lives in community with God and know the endless power of God at work in us, know his inexhaustible resources to help us live out our lives.

And we can live our lives on a tangent that takes us into eternity with God. All of this can be ours because of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Being a Christian, the joy of Easter is much more than about Jesus going into heaven. It is about the restoration of our broken humanity to its original glory as intended by our Creator. That restoration begins with Jesus Christ, and continues in all who follow him. It changes you life, when God works in you as he worked in Christ.

Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.

That means we remove ourselves from centre and put Christ there. We step back from our absorption with self, my needs, my wants, my need for attention, my need for affirmation, and we behold what God has done in Jesus Christ: **You have done this; it's amazing.**

Most of the time the biggest barrier in our lives which prevents us from giving our lives over to Christ and receiving all these benefits is ourselves. For when we are wrapped up in ourselves it is very hard to bow down before another.

We do not save ourselves, and I am profoundly grateful for that fact.

In Christ Jesus you can have a new start, a new life, a life of complete security knowing that what God has done in Christ is your salvation. Economic crises will come and go and your life will have its ups and its downs but God will remain. And God will be enough.

That is why Paul says in Romans: *For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but ...alive to God in Christ Jesus.* Romans 6.9

That is what it means to be Christian: everything else pales in comparison. *This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.* What Christ has achieved for you is utterly life-changing that you cannot go from this place unchanged, if you want to.

And finally:

Our Response

24 *This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

The writer of our Psalm is celebrating a day of victory. War was declared a battle has been fought and now is the day of victory. And the response of the writer of this Psalm is to rejoice in the day that God has brought about.

That is what today is all about: this day, the day of the resurrection of Jesus is unlike any other day in history. On this day the very structure of the universe changed, the fabric of human history altered. When God raised Jesus from the dead, the doors of heaven opened wide and salvation was poured out upon the Earth. Before this day the world lived in the darkness of the shadow of death. Because of this day light shines in the darkness and hope reigns. It comes down to this day that the Lord has made when God raised Jesus from the dead

The Apostle Paul puts it this way, he says:

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits (in other words the first one) of those who have fallen asleep. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 1 Cor.15.20

This is a glorious thing that Paul is saying. He is telling us that because of what God has done in Jesus, in raising him body and soul from death into eternal life, so also will he do the same for us in Jesus Christ: ***in Christ all will be made alive.*** Salvation is not just a theory or an idea. It is not about floating up to heaven when we die. Salvation is about bringing us, body and soul from death to life; salvation is our deliverance

It happens in Christ.

And so I ask you on this day that the Lord has made: **are you in Christ?** If you are then rejoice and be glad at this day that God has brought about. If you are not sure, I encourage you to consider this day what God has done in Christ Jesus, raising him from the dead, and know that God offers to do the same to you in Jesus Christ. It is an offer that has no sell-by-date, it does not expire at midnight, and it is there for the taking when you want.

I can only say for myself that being a Christian is a joy like no other; because when you become a Christian you come into this relationship with God, and in a wonderful way God comes into a relationship with you. And there is nothing quite like it. You discover how much God loves you, how much he does for you. It changes your life in a wonderful way. That happens in your life when you turn to Christ; in your heart, and say: I want to be in you; be in me.

Let us make this our prayer ***22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; Lord you have done this and it is marvelous in our eyes; This is the day the You has made; we rejoice in it; we praise your mighty name for all that you have done for us in Christ Jesus on this great day..***