



Nobody But Jesus: It Feels Like Easter!

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Inspiration for You:

Possible Opener:

One word. Think of the one word that fills you with the most joy. Write it down on the back of a bulletin if you want to.

[Joke] For the record Donuts is spelled D-O-N

I'm going to ask you to say your word. It's an Easter word. So you can't say it quietly. You can't worry what the person next to you will think of your word. You can't try to hide your word. You must say it loud and strong and with as much joy as you can give it. Imagine it was taken from you and then you get it back. Shout it on "Go" ready?

3...2...1....GO.

Think of what Mary went through. In her deepest grief she went to the tomb. She went expecting to prepare his dead body. She left so full of that kind of joy she practically flew.

Mary said, "Rabboni." That's not the same thing as Rabbi. Rabboni was a way to address God. For Mary...that one word in that moment had to be the most joyous word ever spoken.

Some Bible scholars believed that the ending of the gospel of Mark was edited. Mark contains no account of Jesus birth and the first known copies of the written gospel of Mark ended with Chapter 16 verse 8.

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

How amazing that would have been. What if our knowledge of the resurrection story ended with the empty tomb? No appearances afterward. No Peter jumping into the water. No “feed my sheep.” What if it all ended with the empty tomb?

Would we still be here? Would our ancestors in the church have had the faith to keep going?

Mary does not even know it's him until he says her name. We all know who is speaking when they say our name. Isn't there a difference between the way they call your name at graduation and the way your mother called your name when you were in trouble. You know, don't you. You know by the way they call your name.

Jesus said, “Mary.”

The stone was rolled away. Whether the angels rolled it away or it rolled away because of an earthquake...we know Mary and the other women didn't do it. Maybe Jesus did it from the inside. The stone could not keep all that Jesus was in the tomb. The tomb was empty. The stone was rolled away.

What is the stone for you?

Pain?

Depression?

Age?

Divorce?

Cancer?

Betrayal?

Loneliness?

Addiction?

Grief?

The stone has no power over Jesus. Jesus is not in the tomb. The stone was rolled away.

The gospels vary in their accounts of the resurrection. They have different numbers of women going. Different accounts of angels, different accounts of which disciple got

their first. But the one common denominator in all four gospels is that scene where it's just Mary Magdalene and Jesus.

Jesus says, "Do not cling to me." In many movies and Sunday school material Jesus is picture as transparent....as if he were a ghost. I'm not sure that's it.

I think Mary would have thrown herself into his arms and held him so tightly she'd break a rib. She wouldn't have let go of him.

When Jesus says, "Do not cling", the word cling can also mean "cleave." What if Jesus wasn't saying "Let go of me" but "Let me go?"

Jesus was giving the ministry to Mary and the disciples. He was saying, "You've got to run things now."

Jesus gave the ministry to his disciples. They gave it to us. That old phrase "You are the only Jesus some people will ever see" is frighteningly true.

We are the hands and feet and eyes and ears and heart of Jesus.

Jesus is here because we are here.

When our youth go on mission trips...they are Jesus in this world.

NOTE: Cite several specific examples of Jesus "presence" as it is in your congregation.

Jesus is part of us. He exists here. Now.

Who can do that? Who can be here and exist in this here and now through us?

Nobody but Jesus.

Information for you:

Easter: This is the Day (Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24)

Easter! This is indeed the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. On this day above all days it is easy for followers of Jesus the world over to fulfill the command found in this verse from Psalm 118.

Nobody but Jesus rose from the dead after dying on a cross: and on this day we rejoice and are glad in it!

Nobody but Jesus would cause the angels to meet his followers at the tomb that first Easter morning telling them “He is not here. He is risen!” And on this day we rejoice and are glad in it!

Nobody but Jesus could have laid down his life as a sinless sacrifice and made a way for his people to experience salvation: and on this day we rejoice and are glad in it!

We are glad in HIM!

We have been saved by our Savior, Jesus. His Hebrew name, Yeshua, means salvation. Salvation is what the angel of the Lord told Joseph to name his son before he was born in the manger.

“...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ Matthew 1:20-21

God’s people have always needed a rescuer since the Garden of Eden. They always have known they needed to be saved. That is why the people who lined the streets of Jerusalem when Jesus, Yeshua, came riding in on a donkey at the Triumphal Entry were crying out phrases found in Psalm 118.

“Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.” Psalm 118:25-26

The people of God were crying out for a Savior to save them. They saw Jesus, Yeshua, as the one who could rescue them from their oppression from Rome and their lives that needed to feel blessed by God once again.

This is the day that the Lord has made! And so much of what we rejoice and are glad in that revolves around Easter weekend can be tied back not only to the resurrection story found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but also that is found in Psalm 118.

Did you know that Psalm 118 is the most often quoted Psalm in all of the New Testament? It is the only Psalm quoted by all four Gospel writers. Matthew, Mark and Luke each quote it three times each, while John quotes from it once.

In Luke 13 and Matthew 23, two different times when Jesus wept over Jerusalem and lamented that Israel would not come to him, he quoted from Psalm 118. This Psalm held a special place in the heart of Jesus.

Although Psalm 118 may not traditionally be the first passage of the Bible one thinks about when celebrating Jesus' victory over sin, death, Satan and hell, it unquestionably is a passage that whispers the Savior's name and gives cause for Christians to rejoice and be glad in His day!

This Psalm of praise is an ancient song that the people of God have used to rejoice and be glad for centuries. Psalm 118 is a call to worship that demands full engagement on this special day.

Today we will focus on verses 1-2, 14-24. As we read these verses, try to view them through the lens of our Savior who rescued us in victory from the slavery of sin that leads to death.

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! 2 Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” ...

14 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. 15 Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: “The right hand of the LORD does valiantly, 16 the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!”

17 I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD. 18 The LORD has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. 21 I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. 22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Psalm 118 is known as an Egyptian Hallel Psalm. “Hallel” is the Hebrew word that means “to praise” from which we get the word “Hallelujah!” The reason it is known as an Egyptian praise psalm is because it is one of the psalms that have been sung throughout the centuries as a way to remember how God rescued his people out of slavery in Egypt.

The event of this rescue is known as the Exodus and is a story that has been celebrated over the ages because of God's great strength, love and goodness he demonstrated on behalf of his people. It is a story that foreshadowed another rescue of the people of God that we celebrate today known as Easter. Easter is the day the Lord has made for his people to rejoice and be glad in the Exodus from slavery not out of Egypt, but rather, out of sin.

Nobody but Jesus, our Savior, our Messiah, our Lord, could save us from such a death grip that sin had on all of our lives. It causes us to sing songs with rejoicing and gladness because of what God did. We never should get over such a rescue from sin that led to our salvation. The Jewish people never have gotten over the rescue that God did on their behalf concerning the Exodus from Egypt. To this day, they sing this Hallel Psalm and celebrate with feasting to remember the Passover of the death angel when it saw the lamb's blood over the doorways of the Hebrews who were in Egypt. From that first night of Passover recorded in Exodus 12, the Passover has been celebrated with songs and a big symbolic meal known as a Seder meal to remember what God did on behalf of his people.

Psalm 118 would be sung after the Passover celebration meal was eaten. After Jesus enjoyed the Last Supper Passover meal with his disciples, it says Jesus and his disciples did something together.

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” Mark 14:26

Many scholars believe the very last song that Jesus sang before he would be arrested, tried, and crucified for the sins of the world was the Egyptian Hallel Psalm 118 that reminded him of the rescue God was about to do on behalf of all people through himself.

The only way Jesus could rejoice and be glad in that day was because he knew salvation for all people was on its way. He was about to demonstrate the meaning of his own name, Jesus, Yeshua, salvation, through his own impending death on the cross.

The song starts out in verses 1-2 as a call to worship.

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! 2 Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” Psalm 118:1-2

This often times was sung as a call and response song. The levitical priests would call out a verse and the people on their way in to worship at the Temple would respond. It is known as an antiphonal song where two groups sing it back and forth to one another in a call and response kind of cadence. The beauty of Psalm 118 is that it both has elements that are meant for the individual to give thanks to the Lord as well as for the community to give thanks to the Lord. The Lord has brought salvation individually and communally to his people. Thus, they worship with an individual and corporate understanding of what took place on their behalf.

As the people would have been coming into Jerusalem for Passover, they would have been singing this Psalm back and forth as a way to remember the Exodus rescue. It was a song of hope in and celebration of the goodness of God and the steadfast love that God had shown to his people. The word for “steadfast love” is a strong and weighty word in the Hebrew called “hesed.” Hesed is a deep and binding love that is formed when a covenant is made between two parties.

God loves his people with such a consequential love that nothing on earth or in the spiritual realms ever could separate or cause God to violate this kind of covenant love that he has for his people. Hesed is a durable love that is miraculous at its core and depth. This is the kind of love that causes people to worship God and rejoice with gladness that they find themselves the recipients of the robust love of God on this day.

Just imagine the emotions that must have been coursing through Jesus’ mind and body as he sang about the hesed of God that endures forever. Surely this was a reminder of what was at stake as he prepared to go to the cross. It was a covenant love that demanded a deep and enduring, perfect sacrifice once and for all. He would be the perfect sacrificial lamb that would seal the rescue of God’s people forever and through all eternity.

As Jesus and his disciples would have made their way through the verses of Psalm 118, they would eventually sing out verses 14-16.

“14 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. 15 Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: “The right hand of the LORD

does valiantly, 16 the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!” Psalm 118:14-16

Twice he would have sung the word “salvation” at this part of the song. Salvation. Yeshua. Jesus. He and his friends would have sung his own name. He knew he was about to save his friends and the rest of humanity from their sins. He was about to open the door the greatest exodus ever realized. He knew what was on the horizon while his disciples sang of what was passed down from their history. What an impactful stanza: both history and future were sung without them realizing the full effect of God’s hewed for them. As far as the disciples knew, they simply were singing the same song Moses sang after leading the Israelites through the Red Sea to their rescue.

“The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him...Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.” Exodus 15:2, 6

Jesus and his disciples were singing the song that had been sung by their ancestors for generations. What memories it must have conjured as they connected with their past? What thoughts must they have stirred as Jesus prepared for what was in his near future? And how powerful must have verse 17 been for Jesus as he sang about what he soon would experience?

“I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD.” Psalm 118:17

This is the most powerful verse of the entire song. It was the verse written on the wall in Martin Luther’s study. Luther wrote, “This is the psalm that I love,...for it has often served me well and has helped me out of grave troubles, when neither emperors, kings, wise men, clever men, nor saints could have helped me.”

Jesus is about to fulfill verse 17 as his death will not be permanent. It will happen according to the scriptures and prophecies. But death will not be the end of the story. He will live. He will rise again. Death will not hold Jesus down. He will be resurrected by the power of God. The deeds of the Lord will be recounted and told for generations. This is the gospel. This is what we celebrate on this day. It is the day the Lord has made. It is worth rejoicing and being glad because Jesus did not die as a final act of courage.

Jesus died and then rose again that would enable the salvation for all humanity that his name proclaimed. His reality of conquering death gives those who put their faith, hope and trust in Jesus the kind of legacy we can anticipate as his followers. His power over

death gives us hope in our afflictions and suffering. Our afflictions will not end in death for eternity. Any death we face will be overcome by the power of Jesus, Yeshua, our salvation. Thus, we do not grieve in our afflictions as those who have no hope. We have hope in the power of Christ that lives within us!

That is what verse 18 ultimately means for the Christ-follower.

“The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death.”
Psalm 118:18

In other words, death is not the final verdict for our existence. We find hope in overcoming death because of our covenant love that we have with God through his son Jesus. Such hope in our Savior causes us to worship. This is what the next verses of the song lead us to do.

“19 Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. 21 I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.” Psalm 118:19-21

Worship is the natural response of those who have been rescued. The rescuer is the one worthy of such worship. As this song has been sung by God’s people through the ages, the imagery is of the people of God coming into the Temple through the Temple gates to gather and give praise to God. Only those who have been made righteous by the sacrifices acceptable to God could enter and worship with such thanksgiving.

Because the Passover lambs had been killed at the time of this festival celebration, their blood sacrifice made the entrance way open to those who had come to worship with these sacrifices of thanksgiving. When Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away our sin, laid down his life once and for all, those who put their faith, hope and trust in him always would be welcome to worship the Lord with thanksgiving. From that point on our worship and thanks for what God did on our behalf could be lived out in our daily lives.

As Matthew Henry once said, “Thanksgiving is good, but thank-living is better.” When Jesus laid down his life as a sin sacrifice once and for all, he did indeed become our salvation as verse 21 mentions. Yes, he has become our Yeshua, our salvation.

The song then moves on to voice one of the great metaphors of who Jesus is not only for our lives to be built upon, but also for the Kingdom of God to be established.

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” Psalm 118:22-23

A cornerstone is the most important stone of a building project. This is the stone that all the other stones are built around and built upon. Once the cornerstone is set in place, all the remaining parts of the building project can move forward until completion.

In the context of this Psalm, the cornerstone originally referred to Israel as the primary focal point. For Israel, too, had been rejected by the other nations that surrounded her and who were building the great and powerful empires throughout the ages. However, God was going to make Israel the focal point of his Kingdom that would expand to all people in all places for all time. Jesus would be the focal point of this foundation God was building. He would send Jesus to be born as a Jew with a Messianic lineage from King David just as the prophets foretold. Jesus also would be rejected by the Jews and their leaders, and yet God would make him the Savior of all people and the one they would worship.

Before this salvation and worship would take place, rejection leading to crucifixion would come first. Psalm 118:22 alludes to Jesus' death and resurrection. We can say this with full confidence because Jesus said it himself. His words are recorded in Matthew 21. Jesus had just finished telling a parable about farmers that were leased a vineyard to tend. They were to tend the vineyard and harvest the grapes before then giving the owner of the field his share of the profits when the time came due. The owner sent his servants at harvest time to collect the profits, but those who were working the field beat up and eventually killed the servants. We pick up the parable being told by Jesus about himself in verse 37.

“Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ 39 And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” 41 They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?

43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. 44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.” Matthew 21:37-45

In this parable, Jesus was quoting Psalm 118:22-23 and relating himself as the fulfillment not only of the parable, but also of the metaphor of the cornerstone. He was making a bold statement and the religious leaders knew it. When Jesus sang this part of the song after the Lord's Supper, perhaps he flashed back to this moment in his own mind. It was a significant lyric in a song that would continue to be referenced even after the resurrection and ascension.

Psalm 118:22 was such a meaningful lyric and metaphor in the life of the Apostle Peter that he used it in his sermon before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4. After Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension, Peter and John were headed to the Temple to pray. On their way they healed a crippled beggar and were arrested for this action. The religious leaders asked them by what name they did such things. Peter launches into a short, yet powerful, response where he ends up quoting these cornerstone words from Psalm 118.

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:8-12

Peter refers to Jesus not only as the rejected stone who has become the cornerstone, but also as the author of salvation. Again, Jesus' name demonstrates what he is: salvation, Yeshua.

Nobody but Jesus can save us.

Salvation is found in no other name and nobody else.

Jesus is the Savior.
Jesus is the Messiah.
Jesus is the Lord.

And as Psalm 118:24 reminds all who have sung it throughout the ages and especially on this Easter Sunday:

“This is the day that the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it.” Psalm 118:24

We worship him today with hearts that are rejoicing and lives full of gladness because he has saved us from our sins and rescued us for himself. Because he lives today we can face tomorrow and move forward from all our pain and regrets of yesterday. Because of his shed blood on the cross and his glorious resurrection over death, we can approach God and worship him in spirit and in truth.

As Peter also reminds us in his letter:

“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”

8 and

“A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but

now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." 1 Peter 2:1-10

Friends, this is the day that the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it. Because He is risen; He is risen, indeed.