

Songs in the Key of Jesus

Easter 2026

Message 3

3.22.26

Songs in the Key of Jesus

Open

A. Every song is written in a key.

1. A musical key determines the rules and patterns for that song.
2. You can break rules and patterns to add style or emphasis, but you have to know the key.

B. Music has major and minor keys.

1. Majors sound positive.
2. Minors sound sad and dark.
3. Psalm 22 opens in a minor key.

Psalm 22 (CSB)

Psalm 22

FROM SUFFERING TO PRAISE

For the choir director: according to “The Deer of the Dawn.” A psalm of David.

¹ My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why are you so far from my deliverance

and from my words of groaning?

² My God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
by night, yet I have no rest.

³ But you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴ Our ancestors trusted in you;
they trusted, and you rescued them.

⁵ They cried to you and were set free;
they trusted in you and were not disgraced.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by people.

⁷ Everyone who sees me mocks me;
they sneer and shake their heads:

⁸ “He relies on the Lord;
let him save him;
let the Lord rescue him,
since he takes pleasure in him.”

⁹ It was you who brought me out of the womb,
making me secure at my mother’s breast.

¹⁰ I was given over to you at birth;
you have been my God from my mother’s womb.

¹¹ Don’t be far from me, because distress is near
and there’s no one to help.

¹² Many bulls surround me;
strong ones of Bashan encircle me.

¹³ They open their mouths against me—

lions, mauling and roaring.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are disjoined;
my heart is like wax,
melting within me.

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like baked clay;
my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.
You put me into the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded me;
a gang of evildoers has closed in on me;
they pierced my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ I can count all my bones;
people look and stare at me.

¹⁸ They divided my garments among themselves,
and they cast lots for my clothing.

¹⁹ But you, Lord, don't be far away.
My strength, come quickly to help me.

²⁰ Rescue my life from the sword,
my only life from the power of these dogs.

²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth,
from the horns of wild oxen.

You answered me!

²² I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters;
I will praise you in the assembly.

²³ You who fear the Lord, praise him!

All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!

All you descendants of Israel, revere him!

²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred
the torment of the oppressed.

He did not hide his face from him
but listened when he cried to him for help.

²⁵ I will give praise in the great assembly
because of you;

I will fulfill my vows
before those who fear you.

²⁶ The humble will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the Lord will praise him.

May your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth will remember
and turn to the Lord.

All the families of the nations
will bow down before you,

²⁸ for kingship belongs to the Lord;
he rules the nations.

²⁹ All who prosper on earth will eat and bow down;
all those who go down to the dust

will kneel before him—
even the one who cannot preserve his life.

³⁰ Their descendants will serve him;
the next generation will be told about the Lord.

³¹ They will come and declare his righteousness;
to a people yet to be born
they will declare what he has done.

We walk here on Holy Ground...

A. Some of the most hallowed places I've ever walked have been places of unbelievable suffering.

1. Who in here has been to Arlington National Cemetery?
2. How many have been to the Vietnam Wall?
3. These places are hallowed ground.

B. I think every American should visit some of the sites of the big Civil War battlefields.

1. Walking the paths of Civil War battlefields gives a sense of solemnity, that real men had bled here, died here, and suffered here.
2. For those who have visited places like Auschwitz or the Holocaust museums, we begin to sense the suffering that happened there and lingers still.
3. Visiting these places can never fully convey the pain, terror, and suffering that happened there.
4. We get a sketch, but nothing more.

C. **When we turn to Psalm 22, we walk on Holy Ground.**

1. These words, written by a Psalmist, found their ultimate expression on the lips of Jesus.
2. No matter how terrible the Psalmist might have felt, his suffering is eclipsed by the Suffering of Jesus upon the Cross.

There are Seven Sayings of Jesus on the Cross.

A. Mark and Matthew only record one.

1. It is the cry of abandonment we read in Matthew 27 and Mark 15.
2. This cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me", is powerful, memorable, confusing, and comforting.

3. “The Lord Jesus took this psalm upon his lips as his first words on the cross (Matt. 27:46 and parallels).”¹

B. It appears from at least two of the Gospels that Jesus is silent during the beatings and while he hangs upon the cross for 3 hours.

1. For 3 hours, he remains silent while those around him mock him.

2. In Matthew 27:46, Jesus sings.

a. It doesn’t sound like a song. It sounds like a man in the worst of anguish crying out to a God.

b. It doesn’t sound like the sweet sound of a professional singer, but the sound of a man in crisis (what the Princess Bride calls “Ultimate Suffering.”)

c. When David gave the choir director this song, he had the best-trained voices of Israel sing it.

d. When Jesus sings it, it sounds like a man in the greatest agony.

David’s Song.

A. What is David’s occasion?

1. What caused this great agony that initiated this great Psalm?

2. It had to be rooted in some event.

3. David’s pain, like all our pain, has an origin.

4. Yet that origin doesn’t explain the depth of this Psalm.

a. In other words, David had no idea that his Psalm would foreshadow and be fulfilled in Jesus.

b. Even though David might have felt that his pain had no purpose, we see that God used that pain to articulate the Messianic hope.

B. As centuries passed and Israel read this Psalm year after year, the people could not grasp its full meaning.

¹ Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 377.

1. They connected with the message and felt its anointed pull.
2. But all those years, they never imagined that there was coming the one who would fulfill the Psalms' depth at a level and degree like no one else.
3. Only Jesus could do that.

C. David begins with the fear or belief that he is or will be abandoned.

1. "My God..." is the opening line to the song, but it isn't the chorus.
 - a. Verses are sung once, but choruses are repeated.
 - b. The repeated theme is not abandonment but the absolute confidence that God has not failed and will not fail now.
 - c. If you had to summarize this song in one word, it would be "trust".
2. Yes, there is pain, and there is fear, and all of that is real.
3. But then, in verse 21, a pause—a glimmer, a catch of his breath, so to speak—a spark of hope, a reminder.
4. It's the moment in between a verse and a chorus, when the singer catches his breath.
 - a. When the verse gives way to a chorus that sings the true message of the song.
 - b. And here, the singer takes a breathe and God begins to sing.

God's Answer

A. David's lament is stopped by the Lord's answer.

1. An answer that comes from heaven.
2. The answer moves David from pain to worship.
3. The pain is still there, but hope has arrived.
4. Hope is required for worship.

B. The whole mood of the Psalm is changed because God has answered.

1. David proclaims the Lord and invites others to join in.
2. He says, "I will proclaim, and you who fear the Lord, praise Him with me."
3. What David does is lead others in worship.

- a. It may be hard to imagine Jesus leading the crowd in worship on the Cross.
- b. But that is exactly what He is doing.

C. Notice Vs 24.

*For he has not despised or abhorred
the torment of the oppressed.
He did not hide his face from him
but listened when he cried to him for help.*

1. For the Lord has not despised or abhorred the oppressed, of which David is one.
2. God did not hide his face from him but listened when he cried to him for help.
3. The pain is real, the anxiety is real, the darkness is real, but so too is the Lord's help.
 - a. And, "because of you vs 25," David will fulfill his vows.
 - b. The promise he had made will be kept, the duty fulfilled, the sacrifice will be given, and the offering will be paid.
 - c. Yes there is pain, there is fear, there is darkness, BUT David will not turn back now!
 - d. **What began in misery ends in praise.**
 - e. And as accurate as this was for David, it is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus.
 1. Jesus was going to fulfill everything he set out to do.
 2. He would fulfill the vow to the Lord.
4. One commentator says:

The shape of this psalm is straightforward. The first half is Jesus' cry for help (22:1–21); the second half is Jesus' song of praise (22:22–31). The center point or hinge is at the end of verse 21, "you have rescued [esv margin, answered] me." God did not abandon Christ to the grave. After Calvary comes Easter.²

² James A. Johnston, *Preaching the Word: The Psalms: Rejoice, the Lord Is King—Psalms 1 to 41*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, vol. 1, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 234.

On the cross, Jesus sings the only appropriate song.

A. What began as King David's psalm now becomes the Psalm of the Cross.

1. The Second David, the Greater David, the Son of David, the Hope of David, takes up David's words and gives them depth of meaning.
2. In Psalm 22, King David expresses his pain and distress.
3. What is happening isn't clear, but his pain is.
 - a. He feels abandoned.
 - b. He feels defeated.
 - c. He feels pain.
4. Does this describe you?
 - a. What is happening to you isn't clear, but the pain is.
 - b. You don't understand what is happening, but you know it hurts.
 - c. You don't know what the intentions are, but it feels like harm.

B. This is what Jesus sings.

1. Whether Jesus was actually forsaken at that moment or not, he certainly feels this way.
 - a. Jesus feels something he had never felt before.
 - b. No one had felt what Jesus felt in this moment.
 - c. Jesus experienced the wrath of God upon all sin.
2. The cries of the crowds in Matthew 27 were the echoes of Satanic mockery, foreshadowed in Psalm 22.
 - a. Psalm 22: ⁸ "He relies on the LORD; let him save him; let the LORD rescue him, since he takes pleasure in him."
 - b. This echoes the twisting of the Word that Satan tempted Jesus with at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
 1. If you are the Son of God...
 2. If you are who you say you are...

c. If you are who you say you are, then do something about it.

d. Surely the King of Israel and a Son of God would not go like this.

C. But Jesus knew the rest of the Psalm.

1. David wasn't abandoned.

2. David wasn't alone.

3. And now the promised Son of David echoes the refrain.

4. Jesus knew that, as terrible as the next moments were, He would not be cast aside, forsaken, or forgotten.

5. For the same God who guided the descendants of Abraham and spoke to David in David's pain would not fail Jesus now.

E. The crowd that was watching missed the significance of the moment.

1. They thought Jesus was calling for Elijah, whom the Jews believed would come and rescue them if they called.

2. Jesus isn't calling for Elijah; He is calling for His Father.

3. The Father was in charge, the Father was the only one who could help, the Father was whom Jesus set His eyes upon.

F. Jesus knew:

1. The God who hears us in Psalm 20,

2. And the God who will give us victory in Psalm 21,

3. Is the same God who will not abandon us in Psalm 22.

What do we do when we feel like singing Psalm 22?

A. Sometimes it does feel like we are surrounded by our enemies.

1. Sometimes we feel like we are abandoned and forsaken.

2. Sometimes we feel despised and rejected and the very last thing we want to do is worship.

3. How do we survive and not falter when we are surrounded by our enemies?
4. How do we experience victory when it also feels like we are being crucified?

What do we do when we feel like singing Psalm 22?

B. Don't hold back from God.

1. Jesus taught us to pray by saying, "Father, who art in Heaven..."
 - a. But this prayer is more raw.
 - b. It is filled with pain and suffering.
 - c. So it is appropriate that Jesus cries, "My God!!!!"
2. Some breakthroughs come when we put down our pretenses and pride and cry out to God.
 - a. You put away the niceties.
 - b. You put away the guardedness.
 - c. You cry out to God.
3. Many of us were taught a model of prayer that is repetitive but emotionless.
 - a. Repetition is good.
 - b. And so are emotions.
4. When you are singing Psalm 22, when it seems like all is lost, stop being heroic and cry out to God.
 - a. Be like that kid who lost sight of their parent at the theme park.
 - b. Be like that parent who can't find their child in the crowd.
 - c. Be like that husband who lost his wife in Hobby Lobby.

C. Give God space to speak.

1. I really like the way the CSB translates this.
 - a. The translators add the resolution in the 3rd line.
 - b. Psalm 22:21 (CSB)

²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth,

from the horns of wild oxen.

You answered me!

2. God invites us to cry out to Him.

- a. To call upon the Name of the Lord and be saved/rescued.
- b. It is the privilege of the child to call the parent and to vent.
- c. Then it is the right of the parent to speak.

3. When we have poured out our souls to God, give Him room to speak.

- a. If you are always talking, you can't be listening.
- b. But the God who hears is always the God who speaks.

4. How do we hear from God?

- a. Read your Bible, as slow as necessary.
- b. Sing hymns and worship.
- c. Embrace silence (and take a notebook with you.)
- d. Go for a walk and leave your headphones at home.

D. Praise in the pain.

1. Notice what David and Jesus sang!

Psalm 22:22–26 (CSB)

²²I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters;

I will praise you in the assembly.

²³You who fear the LORD, praise him!

All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!

All you descendants of Israel, revere him!

²⁴For he has not despised or abhorred

the torment of the oppressed.

He did not hide his face from him

but listened when he cried to him for help.

²⁵ I will give praise in the great assembly

because of you;

I will fulfill my vows

before those who fear you.'

²⁶ The humble will eat and be satisfied;

those who seek the LORD will praise him.

May your hearts live forever!

2. Every Christian must learn to praise while in pain.

a. Every Christian must learn to worship in the suffering.

b. Every Christian must practice sacrifice in crisis.

3. Verse 26 said the humble will eat and be satisfied.

a. Nothing humbles us like pain and suffering.

b. But those who seek the Lord and praise Him, even when we feel broken and forsaken, will not be put to shame.

I may be on the cross, but God is on the throne!³

A. No matter what song you are singing, Jesus sang it best.

1. Jesus knows all about our troubles.

2. Jesus knows what it's like to sing in a minor key.

3. Jesus knows what it's like to be tempted, tried, torn, and troubled.

B. Because Jesus is victorious, we celebrate with Him.

³ George O. Wood. Psalm in your Heart. 90.

1. Psalm 20 reminds us that God hears the cries of His people.
2. Psalm 21 teaches us to remember that it is the Lord's strength that sustains us.
3. Psalm 22 proves that God is the One we can trust.