

Palm Sunday / March 29, 2026

Psalm 130:3-4

*"If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."*

With You There is Forgiveness

Psalm 130 is a 'Song of Ascents,' one of the psalms the pilgrims prayed as they made their way through the hills of Judah rising up to the temple mount. That being said, it is noteworthy that like their pilgrimage, it begins in the depths. The psalmist sings, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord." We make our way through the depths as we journey upward to the presence of the Lord in heaven. We live in a world submerged in sin, enthralled to the devil and under the condemnation of death. We struggle with our own sinful nature. We cry to the Lord for strength to resist the desires of our sinful nature, for strength to resist the allurements of the world and the temptations of the devil. We cry to the Lord in the face of death. We cry to the Lord in faith, believing that with Him there is forgiveness for the sake of Jesus, His Son and our Saviour. We remember the words of the psalmist, "*With you there is forgiveness.*"

We cry to the Lord knowing He hears us, looks forward to hearing our prayers. We know this, because He loves us. We know He loves us because He has given Jesus to live with us, die for us and rise for us. We cry to the Lord at all times, but especially when we are in the depths of sorrow, fear, depression, anxiety and despair. In fact, it could be said that we truly cry out to the Lord with a heartfelt faith when we are in the depths. Remember Jonah? He was the prophet who tried to run away from the word of the Lord and avoid the Lord's call to preach repentance to the people of Ninevah. He had a change of heart only after being cast into the sea and being swallowed by a gigantic fish. He was deep in the bowels of the fish, deep in the heart of the sea. He truly cried to the Lord from the depths, literally and figuratively. The Lord answered him and delivered him from the depths of the sea and the depths of his despair. The experience of crying out of the depths reorientated Jonah so that he took the word of the Lord to heart and did what the Lord asked him to do. With the Lord there is forgiveness,

therefore He is feared, honoured, exalted and praised for the majesty of His love. God has prepared forgiveness for all people in Christ Jesus. He atoned for the sin of the world through His sinless life, perfect obedience and sacrificial death. He calls us now to receive His forgiveness through faith. Through the word and working of the Holy Spirit, He opens our ears to hear. He opens our hearts to receive Him and His forgiveness. Receive Him now. Receive His love in forgiveness. With the Lord there is forgiveness!

The most important thing Jonah learned from his experience of disobedience, being swallowed by a big fish and repentance, was that with the Lord there is forgiveness. The Lord forgave Jonah's disobedience. Jonah learned a lesson, but not completely. He rejoiced in the forgiveness he received, but he was still not prepared for that forgiveness to be given to and received by his enemies. He went to Ninevah, proclaimed judgement, but not repentance. He simply said *"In forty days Ninevah will be overturned."* He was disheartened when the people repented and the Lord relented from destroying the city. But that's another story. The point made crystal clear was that with the Lord there is forgiveness, both for His people Israel and for all other people who come to faith, repent and believe. The most important thing anyone can know and believe is that with the Lord there is forgiveness, that this forgiveness is offered for all to receive. That this forgiveness is given and guaranteed to all who believe for the sake of Jesus and the atonement of His cross. With the Lord there is forgiveness.

Jonah didn't like the people of Ninevah, the capital of the cruel and mighty Assyrian Empire. If you know anything of the cruel and inhuman practices of the Assyrian Empire and the atrocities their army committed against conquered people, you wouldn't blame him. When the people of Ninevah repented and the Lord relented, Jonah complained to Lord saying, *"Is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? This is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster."* Seems like an odd thing to be angry about, but nevertheless it perfectly describes the Lord and His attitude towards all the fallen children of Eve. God desires not our

destruction, but our salvation. With Him there is forgiveness. He gave His Son to redeem us from our sins, to pay their debt, that all who believe would stand in His presence now through faith, forever in the resurrection of Jesus. With you there is forgiveness therefore you are feared.

What kind of things are you afraid of? What are your fears? Whatever they are, I'm sure forgiveness is not one of them. When the teacher called me to the front of the class or sent me to the principal's office it wasn't forgiveness I was afraid of. Who would be afraid of forgiveness? Of course, the fear to which the psalmist refers is not the fear of terror and punishment, but the holy respect and awe at the amazing grace of God who desires not the death of sinners, but that we would turn from our sins, turn to Him, be forgiven and live. We stand in holy awe at God's power expressed in His creation. The universe so vast and complex should humble us and cause us to confess the majesty of the Lord. The majesty of the Lord in creation pales in comparison with the majesty of the Lord expressed in forgiveness. The simple fact that the Lord redeemed Israel of their sins in the sacrifices of the temple inspired a greater respect and more holy sense of awe in the psalmist than all the stars in the sky. We have a deeper sense of the holy fear of the Lord, because we know He has given His Son to redeem us from our sins and be our Saviour. With you there is forgiveness therefore you are feared.

We have a natural sense of forgiveness and our need to forgive and be forgiven. Forgiveness is in our best interest in terms of our daily lives in the world. What is so amazing about God's forgiveness is that it is not the forgiveness of the world, or of the human heart infected and affected by sin. We may forgive. We may want to forgive, but we never forget. When we remember someone else's sins, we have to start forgiving all over again. Sometimes when we remember own sins, we have to begin to remember all over again that God forgives us. God's forgiveness is of a completely different order. God forgives and forgets. In Isaiah 43:25 the Lord assures Israel that He both forgives and forgets. Do you remember someone else's sins? Do you remember your sins. God doesn't remember. He says, *"I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember*

*your sins.*” God forgives and forgets time and time again. God blots out, covers over our sins, for His own sake with the righteous blood of Jesus, so that not only are our sins forgiven, but He remembers them no more! With you there is forgiveness therefore you are feared.

Even though He was crying to the Lord from the depths physically and spiritually, the psalmist had hope. His hope was in the Lord. He sang, *“For with the Lord there is steadfast love.”* Steadfast love is a firmly rooted love. A love that is not swayed by changing emotions. A love that is not moved by anger. A love based on the nature of God who does not change. God is love. The psalmist sang, ‘With the Lord there is plentiful redemption.’ Forgiveness grounded in love is expressed in redemption. God expresses His steadfast love in redemption. Redemption is God’s action in taking upon Himself the guilt and debt of Israel’s sin. God did this first through the sacrifices of the tabernacle and temple. He did it fully, forever and for all people in the sacrifice Jesus offered in the temple of His body on the cross. The plentiful redemption upon which the psalmist based his hope was foreshadowed by the sacrifices of the temple and tabernacle. It was expressed fully in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, by which He atoned for the sin of the world.

The psalmist sang, *“He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”* The Lord redeemed Israel and all people of their iniquities in the sacrifice of Jesus. His perfect obedience to the law in our place and His death on the cross for our sake. In His sinless life and sacrificial death, Jesus atoned for the sin of every human soul. Because of this we have the assurance of forgiveness, hope in every trial and especially in face of death. The Lord is our Redeemer. Jesus is our Saviour. In Him we have forgiveness, therefore we fear Him, not in terror but in gratitude, holy awe and thankfulness for His forgiveness. God is an awesome God, for many reasons, most importantly because with Him there is forgiveness. God grant us to know, to see, to believe and to receive His forgiveness in holy awe through faith in Jesus. In His Name. Amen.