

# The Howling Song (Psalm 88)

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     So Psalm 88. A song, a psalm of the sons of Korah for the director of music.
- According to Mahalath Leonoth, a maschal of Heman the Ezraite. Lord, you are the God who saves me.
- Day and night I cry out to you. May my prayer come before you. Turn your ear to my cry. I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death.
- I am counted among those who go down to the pit. I am like one without strength. I am set apart with the dead. Like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.
- You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. Your wrath lies heavily on me. You have overwhelmed me with all your waves.
- [ 1 : 0 4 ]     You have taken me from my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape. My eyes are dim with grief.
- I call to you, Lord, every day. I spread out my hands to you. Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise you?
- Do your love declared in the grave? Your faithfulness in destruction? Are your wonders known in the place of darkness?
- Or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion? But I cry to you for help, Lord. In the morning, my prayer comes before you. Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?
- From my youth, I have suffered and been close to death. I have borne your terrors and am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me. Your terrors have destroyed me.
- [ 2 : 0 6 ]     All day long, they surround me like a flood. They have completely engulfed me. You have taken from me, friend and neighbour. Darkness is my closest friend.
- Good afternoon, church, and thank you, Venus. It's always nice to have a medical professional to work us through mental health. But again, just her pastoral heart as well, and helping us pray through such an important topic as well.
- Yeah, thank you for joining us. Maybe if you're on live stream, sorry we can't see you today, but thank you for tuning in as well. And this is a heavy psalm, isn't it? Who's ever heard a sermon on Psalm 88?
- Yeah? So, not me until, yeah, only a few years ago. So, I'm on this journey with you, through some of the harder parts of the scriptures as well. But it is Mental Health Awareness Week, and so, please, if anything that is mentioned today just feels really troubling for yourself, you have my full permission, if you want to take a break, want to head into one of the other rooms, or even just to ask someone for help, it's okay to do that.
- It's absolutely fine as well. Who's seen the movie Inside Out? Because, yeah? So, this is a little poster. I think when I watched it 10 years ago, there were only five, I think, emotions displayed as little cute characters, and so, obviously, I'll have to catch up on what new emotions have been put on screen by Disney.

[ 3 : 43 ] And so, I thought, you know, from time to time, this topic comes up a lot, right? And so, often, our practice here at PCBC, we walk through books of the Bible. We know that God is always relevant, and as we encounter Him through His Word, all kinds of topics, including, you know, how to deal with suffering and struggles, comes up.

But from time to time, I think it's always helpful just to pause and just look at something from a different angle, and I think the Psalms are particularly good at that, and so, from time to time, I thought, perhaps we could dive into some of these topics, some emotions that we encounter in the life, you know, just in life, and how to think through them with a spiritual lens.

And so, today, we are looking at that top left lady, the one that looks like she's sad, right? It's a sadness. And so, I hope this Psalm will be a comfort and a help to you as we encounter someone who is only expressing that emotion of sadness.

So, let's pray again, and we'll ask God to help us. Lord, this is a really difficult Psalm, perhaps one we've never encountered, and so do help us.

As we hear these words that were originally written by a guy that we never knew, we've never met, but was one of the songwriters of the Bible, help us to know that even in these God-breathed, Spirit-inspired words, that there is hope for us.

[ 5 : 13 ] There is something we can learn together as we wrestle with all of our difficult emotions. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. What would shout to the Lord sound like in a minor key? All right? Shout to the Lord. Classic Hillsong anthem.

All right? I'm sure most of you have sung it in whatever language because it's so popular. What would it sound like in a minor key, though? This was a question that a guy called Marcus Curnow tried to ask, and so in 2005, he kind of rewrote the words to shout to the Lord in a bit of a minor key spin.

Of course, the original words come from the Psalms, right? Psalms 95 to 100, all about shouting to the Lord who's king and throne over all. But he wanted to kind of give it a bit of a spin, right?

So this is what he came up with. Why, Jesus? Why favor those who do not like you? And he keeps going. He says, all of my years I cry bitter tears.

[ 6 : 20 ] I wonder where's your mighty love? What does singing to God sound like in a minor key? Have you ever asked that question, church?

What do you shout to the Lord? What happens when you can't even shout, maybe? All you feel is pain or despair. What happens when you've just experienced an unimaginable tragedy?

You've seen something you can't unsee, and the last thing on your mind is to shout to the Lord. Well, thank God for songs like Psalm 88. Unlike most of our, I think, modern worship settlers, the Holy Spirit was wise enough to offer and author the Psalms.

150 songs, and at least a third of them, 42 to be precise, are what we call laments. A lament is a song, right, written by an ordinary person who loved God, worshipped him, like David or the sons of Korah, like this one, that primarily just pour out sorrows and sadness before God.

And this is worship. That's what a lament is. A lament is when sadness comes out of a person, and it's worship. But of course, if you're like me, you'll have read in your Bibles, right?

[ 7 : 46 ] You'll read your Bible readings, and then you'll come across, I don't know, you'll just come across things in the Bible, and you just, after reading it, you just wonder, now why on earth did God put that there?

I don't know. Recently, I don't know, starving women who had to eat their own children, 2 Kings, why is this in the Bible? Lists of food and dietary laws and offerings in Leviticus, and I'm reading that recently.

Why is this in the Bible? And maybe you've asked that question today. Why is this psalm in the Bible? The howling song. Why did God give us this song, full of darkness without hope, as Venus suggested, right?

There are many other psalms, even when they start dark, they turn up to hope. And yet this one, bitter from start to finish, in fact, the very last word in the original language of this psalm is darkness.

You want to swap those words around. My closest friend, darkness. Why did God want us to hear this psalm? And I want to suggest that this is a song that you and I desperately need.

[ 9 : 01 ] We need it not just on Mental Health Awareness Week. I think we need it all year round. We need it because this is a song that God has written and knows we need so much.

So how do we understand this psalm as a Christian people, as PCBC? Well, this is our job to try and make sense of it in the next couple of minutes.

A couple of us have been recently trying to put together a song. So some of you were here yesterday when a bunch of people, Pastor Barry, Julianne, Isaac, they're putting together a very ambitious song, trying to sing it together.

There's a children's choir and a band and then like an adult's choir, all kind of mashed together. So we will hear the end results at some stage, I'm sure. It's really fun trying to put a song together, isn't it?

I have the privilege of doing that myself, this time in a recording studio. We kind of tracked a song layer by layer. So I don't know if you've ever tried to write your own music or record your own music.

[ 10 : 05 ] You can't do it all at once, right? You've got to start maybe with laying down the foundational part like the drums, right? Record a drum track. And then maybe you add the bass line and then the keys perhaps.

And then you start to kind of build your song like a cake sort of thing. I want to suggest we kind of take the same approach with this psalm, right? So we're going to pull it apart a bit.

Have a look at some of the foundational parts of the song. The drums, the bass, the keys perhaps. And then finally I want us to share some reasons why even a psalm like this can be sung by you and I with the melody of King Jesus as part of his choir here at PCBC.

Let me first suggest to you that Psalm 88 invites us to experience that life can be dark and even God's people admit this.

Life can be dark. Even God's people admit this. That's one of the foundations of the song. Any proper understanding of a psalm that's in the Bible needs to start not from verse 1 but from verse 0.

[ 11 : 12 ] Okay, now you're asking what's verse 0? It's actually the superscription above what we in our English Bibles see as verse 1. But actually in the original text, that introduction is just as inspired, right?

It's been preserved for us. It helps us to interpret and understand the Holy Spirit-given context of this particular psalm. Just as if you are performing or practicing a piece for your orchestra, for your instrument exam, that sort of thing, you need to read the instructions at the top of your sheet music, right?

These ones tell us this. There's a music director. This was written by a person at one stage at one time, the sons of Korah, right?

But they're originally a masculine song of Heman the Ezraite. All of this really just tell us this was someone, this was written by someone who really felt this once upon a time. And then these words have been taken to be sung by a wider group, right?

In other words, this is a song for Julianne and the band to bring to a wider group. That's what it says. This inspired text also gives us a style or a tune.

[ 12 : 29 ] We don't know what it is now. The picture is this is a song that God's people would have sung together. This is not just put it on your earbuds and listen it to by self in your bedroom, no.

This is not just read the psalm in silence and then just skip it quickly and never go to it again. No, this is a psalm we put on the projector. We print it in our bulletins.

This is a psalm that we need to actually put on our lips and sing together. Yes, even this psalm. And then look at verse 1. What does it say? The psalm then begins with an impassioned appeal to Yahweh, the Lord, for salvation or deliverance.

Actually, what's the verb here in the original language, we get it translated in NIV as cry, right? All right. But I think this word actually should be a little bit stronger. This word is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe much harder things.

Oppression in Judges chapter 4. All right. Or looming destruction in Exodus 14. And I'm sorry to say this, even rape in Deuteronomy 22.

[ 13 : 38 ] You want to think of the strongest, saddest cry that has ever left someone's lips that you've heard. That's the songwriter's opening emotion.

He is howling day and night to the Lord. It's not the polite kind of please and thank you prayer that we see here in Psalm 88.

All right. Or the kinds of prayers that you offer in your small groups and your hangouts together. And this is certainly not a kind of triumphant prayer, right, that you might encounter in a, I don't know, in a prayer meeting where everyone is just bubbling over with excitement and fervor.

Honestly, I think most Christians today have no category for this kind of worship. Have a look.

Lyrics like this, right? I'm overwhelmed with troubles, verse 3. And my life draws near to death. You could almost translate this as, I'm up to my neck in troubles.

[ 14 : 43 ] It's killing me. And yet this is God's people admitting the truth. At times life can be dark. Of course this isn't the only psalm in the Bible, right?

So, of course we have other emotions. Joy. Disgust. Laughter. Anger. Delight. Many of us have come from a week full of good memories and good food, good times.

I'm sure you can recount many of them. Now, even in the past week, I've loved just hanging out with family members after being separated for so long. Just enjoying spring, right?

The cherry blossoms in the lanes. Just the beautiful weather that God has given us. So much in our world is good as we have sung. And yet haven't you also, at some point, experienced days where you just could not get out of bed?

Where your emotions were just in shreds for weeks? Where you were just weeping bitterly over something you could not escape from?

[ 15 : 55 ] How do we voice all this out? As one author, Carl Truman, puts it, what can miserable Christians sing?

And perhaps the answer is right in front of us. Psalm 88. The psalmist continues, right, in verse 4. Have a look in your Bibles. I'm counted among those who get out of the pit.

It's as if his life hangs by a thread. As if this person is in Sheol, what he knows as the land of the dead. He's counted like someone who's spent all their strength.

And by this point, you'll notice that there's no specific story that you can trace in this psalm, right? Some of you have read some of the other psalms of the Bible. There might be a back story, right?

King David is running from Absalom, that sort of thing. Or King David has made a big mistake and he's sorry to God, like Psalm 51, right? And sometimes psalms pop up in the New Testament.

[ 16 : 54 ] So we have a bit of a flash forward and people have seen how they point to Jesus in a very explicit way. And so we can kind of read a psalm and go, ah, I know what that means now as a Christian. We don't get any of that here, do we, right?

It seems like this psalm has a psalmist, a songwriter, who cries out with severe, ongoing, and yet non-specific troubles, right?

And so that means these words fit all kinds of difficult situations that you and I face, don't they? This means that this psalm is a good psalm for all of us as we face all kinds of issues.

Long-term health problems, broken family relationships, unwanted loneliness and despair. All of us can find something to relate to in Psalm 88.

This is a psalm that invites us to experience honest-to-God worship. It's a song from God's people pouring out sadness, openly admitting that life can be dark.

[ 18 : 11 ] Maybe here at this point you're thinking, I'm not really comfortable about this psalm. I'm part of the new covenant now. I'm part of God's joyous people.

I had a wonderful conversation with a very well-known worship leader, right? Yeah, I don't think he'll mind me naming, like, because we had a big talk and he said, like, we should talk more about this. And so this guy, his name's Grant, he said, oh, look, William, I just don't get it.

Why would we sing a psalm like this, right? We should be singing songs of victory, right? Jesus is the one who conquered the grave and so on. Surely, as Christians, we sing now with a cross and resurrection in mind.

Isn't a song like this out of date? Surely these Israelites, you know, they should have known better, right? And now we know better. And look, on the face of it, it can seem that way, can't it?

Seems like as we read the psalm, all the psalmist has to look forward to is just to be in oblivion or just be eliminated, right? When they're dead, then all their struggles stop. Seems really bleak, doesn't it?

[ 19 : 20 ] Looking forward to death's realm of destruction, a place of darkness. Maybe since he doesn't know what we Christians know with Jesus, does that mean we can retire this psalm and just pack it away like all the difficult parts of the Bible we don't like?

Before you and I rush to do that, though, think about our next point. Have a think about the baseline that's actually running through this song. Not only is this a song that God's people get to openly admit that life is dark, but actually here in Psalm 88, we get the cry that life can be dark, but the Lord saves.

Life can be dark, but the Lord saves. Look again who the psalmist is crying out to, right? It's a very simple question. Who is this song directed to?

What's the answer? It's the Lord, right? Lord, first word in verse one, you are the God who saves me.

Verse nine, I call to you, Lord. Verse 13, I cry to you for help, Lord. Even when the psalmist is crying, why? It's why, Lord?

[ 20 : 35 ] L-O-R-D in capitals also gives us a clue, right? So the baseline here is this. The psalmist isn't just lamenting to himself. It's not just a self, you know, a pity party by himself.

This is a direct cry to Yahweh, the God who appeared to Abraham and Noah and Moses, the God who is the one who makes promises and keeps them.

We need to understand the difference between secular psychotherapy and God-centered biblical lament is who we cry out to.

Modelled right here in the Psalms, from verse one onwards, is a singer who is not just crying out, I cry out day and night, woe is me. Right? He doesn't actually say that.

He is directing his cries, his dark cries, to the Lord who saves. Can you see that? That's the difference. That's the difference between how Christians lament and how the world laments.

[ 21 : 35 ] When you are attacked on all sides, it is so tempting to throw a pity party. When you hear devastating news in your life, it's easy to find friends, counselors, doctors, just to tell us what we want to hear.

When you are drowning under pressure, it is very easy to justify selfish thoughts, sinful behaviors and actions. Right? You could just shout out, can't you see I'm suffering?

So let me go and click this or do that or be mean in this way. Much harder, but far more biblical to do what the psalmist is doing. Direct our hurts straight to the Lord who we know saves.

Right? And that opening line literally reads, Lord, God of my salvation. One translation puts it. As uncomfortable as the psalmist has felt.

As uncomfortable as the song is to us. This is actually a faithful cry. Right? Not a faithless cry. What we see here and in every age is that God's people are allowed to, and they're welcome to, cry out their unanswered tears.

[ 22 : 50 ] To the Lord who saves. And so can we. Because the same promise keeping savior who invites us to call him our shepherd and praise.

Right? The Lord's our shepherd. I will not want. He invites us to howl out to him even. In lament. In despair. It's right here. It's right here in Psalm 88.

But this isn't actually the hardest part of Psalm 88. I think. Because not only is there that drumbeat. Right? Of honest to God worship.

Right? Not only is there the baseline of a faithful worshiper crying to the Lord. This is a faithful cry. There's also the ominous sound.

Right? Imagine the keys going. And it's playing out this melody. Life can be dark. Why are you behind it God? Why are you behind this?

[ 23 : 51 ] This is a movie that I watched a while back. But it still stuck in my mind. Martin Scorsese directed this film. Silence. Who's seen the movie Silence? 2016.

Set in Japan. So some people are all Japan lovers. No? Okay. I'll give a very brief summary. A couple of priests. Jesuit priests. were looking to bring Catholicism to Japan in the 17th century.

But they face horrific persecution. Right? So this is not the kind of Japanese anime that, you know, people have really enjoyed. No Hello Kitty in here.

Honestly, this is a really tough movie to watch. Because here are people who are just dying and being killed and persecuted everywhere. And here, and the main characters, as they reflected on the horrors they saw around them, one of the guys, Rodriguez, says this, and I quote him, The weight of your silence, God, is terrible.

I pray, but I'm lost. Or am I just praying to nothing? Nothing because you're not there? Amen. He's feeling dark emotions there. Psalm 88, though, it goes even further.

[ 25 : 04 ] It's not just that God is silent. You notice that as the psalmist talks, God is right there. He's behind it all. I mean, look at verses 6 to 8 in particular, right?

It's all you. Do you notice that? You've put me in the lowest pit. It's your wrath lying heavily on me. You've taken me from my closest friends. You've overwhelmed me.

My friends shun me now because of you. That's what he's saying. In a sense, and this is the hardest part theologically of the psalm, Psalm 88, in a sense, is saying life sucks.

And it's your fault, God. Right? If we were Ukraine, God feels like the aggressor. If we were school kids, God feels like the bully right now.

What do we do with this? How do we process something like this? How could this possibly even be the same promise-keeping God in all the other psalms that we are used to?

[ 26 : 04 ] Right? Isn't God the majestic one over the earth or the shepherd, the king who reigns over all? And yet, is this not, if we're honest, how some of you have felt before the Lord at some times?

Have you ever once, even once, prayed, Lord, how long will this hurt? Have you ever once, even once, asked the Lord, why did you do this?

Why did you make me lose this? Can you see, here's a lament that is stubbornly challenging God, precisely because the singer knows God is in control.

Some of you might ask, well, what about James, chapter 1, verse 13, right? Let no one say when he's tempted, I'm being tempted by God. What about John 10, 10, right?

The thief, he comes to kill, steal, destroy. Surely the Lord doesn't do this kind of thing. Surely my suffering can't be God's fault. We don't have time to unpack everything here.

[ 27 : 16 ] And we need to remember something about the psalms. The psalms are pretty unique. It's the one book in the Bible where it's full of inspired words from God that are essentially human cries up to him.

Have you ever thought about that kind of paradoxical thing? So the whole book of Psalms is a human response to God. But God has said this is his word to us, right?

There's this kind of weird like back and forth going on. There's a tension here, isn't there? Here is God's word where humans are voicing out their experiences, not just a package teaching letter by letter, chapter by chapter about God's sovereignty, his salvation, his justification, like other parts of the Bible.

And so, yes, sometimes what he keeps for us here, preserves for us here, feels tender and beautiful when people feel that. Sometimes it feels like struggle and sorrow and even questioning.

And again, this is all capturing and giving us permission. Whatever you're feeling and even thinking to God, cry it out to him.

[ 28 : 32 ] Cry it out to him. You know, when we lament as worship like this, God is not like an embarrassed parent in a library or in a church or something, right?

Shh, you know, just be quiet. Don't be so loud in here. You can't say that here. No, he's not like that. Our God, our Father welcomes all our hardest thoughts and emotions, even our accusations.

For every desperate circumstance and prayer from your heart, we have a God who invites us to shout to the Lord, sometimes literally. How are we going so far?

This is a hard psalm, I get it. It's good that we do this hopefully once a year, right? Mental Health Awareness Week, right? And maybe some of you here are thinking, well, I get this psalm now a little bit better, but why on earth sing it, right?

Why can't we just rewind and just sing more about how awesome our God is or the goodness of Jesus and so on? Let me close with three reasons why, even when life can be dark, we ought to and we are welcome to sing this particular psalm.

[ 29 : 54 ] One reason, when we sing Psalm 88 together, we find that we're not alone. And our sadness and our lament. There's something beautiful in verses 10 to 12 of the psalm, isn't there, right?

As you can tell, these are all questions. At this point, the psalmist is like, just asking God all kinds of questions, five of them, in fact. He doubles down. If I die, who will praise you?

Who's gonna praise your steadfast love if this ends me? But God is not silly, right? He's not like, you caught me. You asked me a question.

I'm so stuck now. I don't know how to answer. Actually, these questions are not for God, right? Only. They're for those of us who sing them or who hear these cries. Again, can you see this is a song for all of us?

We're joining in. We are right there answering with the psalmist, Yeah, no. The answer's no. And in doing so, we find that we're not alone any longer as we join in this one person's lament.

[ 30 : 58 ] As we go, yeah, I'm with you. I get what you mean. This is how one sister felt when she sang Psalm 88 with others.

I can share her story. She's given permission. She was in the midst of an abusive relationship. And for her, singing Psalm 88, and I quote her, gave her permission to sit in grief and lament for a while without having to force fake joy.

Isn't that wonderful? And ultimately, for this sister, by hearing friends sing this psalm with her at that moment in time, it was such a powerful reminder of the fact that she was part of a united body of Christ who felt how she felt.

She was no longer alone in her lament. And as Venus asked earlier, most of us, I think, will have carried unspoken griefs to church this evening.

I know. I'm one of them. And perhaps worshiping together with Psalm 88 has started to help you realize you are not alone in your lament, in your grief, your depression, your despair.

[ 32 : 19 ] Maybe by even just encountering this psalm, you realize horrible things have happened. And they've happened among God's people. And it feels awful even now.

But when you and I sing in the darkness about our darkness, suddenly we have courage, don't we, to name and share what breaks our hearts. And yet we now have done it, no longer alone, but together.

I think another reason we sing Psalm 88 together, it's to find it's not always well in our lives. I think one of the reasons that many of us kind of feel repulsed by a psalm like this is that the idea of lamenting, expressing our sorrows openly, has kind of fallen out of favor in our day and age, right?

And these days when social media forces us to present our best image, these days when life can be filtered in any way, shape or form, these days when actually our default kind of OS, if we all had an operating system, would be to think in the view of pleasure and pain, right?

Everyone has an inner therapist trying to help us to navigate life. There's no inner grammar anymore. There's no inner judge saying, that's right, that's wrong. We all have inner therapists, right? This pain, pleasure worldview, I think makes it really hard for us to openly admit that we are sad.



[ 33 : 51 ] We reach for therapy as quickly as it can. And therapy comes in all sorts of forms. It could be a coffee, it could be a prescription drug, it could be an addiction, it could be an affirmation from someone. And if you come from maybe cross-cultural backgrounds, it might be even doubly hard, right?

You live in a world where pleasure and pain is the norm. You chase pleasure, you avoid pain. And then you have family members who give you other expectations around honor and shame, right?

So you're actually not allowed to be sad or have a mental condition, right? That would bring deep shame to your family. And then you have to wrestle with that too.

And then it becomes really embarrassing to grieve openly. You know, when Psalm 30 verse 5 says, weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning, I think our default reaction is joy, joy, joy.

Ignore the weeping that carries through the night. And isn't it the worst when everything said and done in church pretends nothing's wrong? Like we all have picture-perfect lives.

[ 34 : 55 ] And if you come in and you have a problem, there's something wrong with you. Wow. I'll share one of my sorrows.

The morning after, a friend of mine, Pastor Dave, went into ICU. I sat there with his wife as the doctor came out and was very polite, shook her hand and said, good luck.

But essentially, he wasn't positive that he would make it through. And the next morning, just on my morning run, all I could howl out at 5 a.m. was this psalm.

I think singing songs like Psalm 88 together helps us realize it's okay not to be okay. It's all right that not everything is always well in our lives. Yeah?

Because as one author put it, sometimes we don't need you to pick me up or to tell us a Bible verse to flip us the other way. Sometimes we just want someone to sit next to us and weep with those who weep.

[ 36 : 04 ] And just as you may find it uncomfortable to sing a sad song with someone else when you don't feel sad, maybe your sister or brother might find it uncomfortable to sing a happy song with you when they're not feeling happy, right?

It works both ways, doesn't it? And so maybe the solution is to let both lament and praise be part of our worship. Not an either or, but a both and, right?

What we do then is we actually follow the Apostle Paul's advice. He says in Romans 12, he says, rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Yeah?

Who said that a worship song was there just for you anyways? So would we lament for each other just as we rejoice with each other? Maybe that's something we can work on as a church in the long run.

I think finally, third reason, the most important reason that we can sing Psalm 88 is that when we sing it together, we actually find God's voice deeper in our darkness.

[ 37 : 07 ] What you and I need to understand, and this will only make sense as Christians, is that our Lord Jesus was a Psalm singer. It even says in Matthew's Gospel, right?

And they sang a hymn and went up to the Mount of Olives. He had no Hillsong album, no Bethel playlist to turn to. It would have been the Psalms, right? As one preacher points out, this is a Psalm that Christ could have and would have meditated on as he set his face towards Jerusalem.

And I know most of us will think, oh yeah, Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. I can see Jesus there, right? But then we start to doubt with a Psalm like this.

Surely Jesus' playlist would cut this one out, right? And I just want to remind you all and myself, Jesus sang the blues in public as well.

You don't believe me? Listen to his words, right? Foxes have holes and birds have nests. The Son of Man has no place to lay down his head.

[ 38 : 15 ] Is that a major or minor key? Jerusalem, Jerusalem. How often have I longed to shelter you under my wings, but you were not willing?

Major key? Minor key. At the cross, he hangs there. He says, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Straight out of Psalm 22, right? A cry of lament. I think like Heman's howls here, Jesus, knowing the Psalms inside out, would have begged, even sweat drops of blood, for the possibility of relief from his sorrows.

He too would have asked, O Lord, you are the God who saves me. All day and night I cried to you. Aren't you the God who saves me, Father? And as we know, as we know the gospel story, as we know what happened on Good Friday, the Father was behind the son's oblivion, his destruction.

At the cross, when the Father turned his face away from his son bearing all the sin of our world, Jesus experienced Psalm 88, verse 14.

[ 39 : 38 ] O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide his face from me? The gospel is this, isn't it? The gospel is this.

Our Lord Jesus embraced darkness as his only friend, so that those of us who trust this man of sorrows will never have to endure the darkness he endured.

Do you believe this? The only way we would join the choir and sing the song as followers of Jesus is when we know that Jesus walked this melody, sung these words, lived these lyrics out.

Psalm 88 is the good news. It tells us, even when darkness is my closest friend, I can howl and lament to the Lord who saves me. And so finally in closing, as we sing psalms and songs and worship songs like this, even in minor keys, I think together we can find the voice of Jesus deeper in our darkness, further in our pain.

We realize that for all the songs out there, sometimes it's in laments like these that we hear him sing the solo part. We can see his goodness, even in the darkest moments.

[ 41 : 01 ] And so Jesus invites us, bring our joys and our sorrows to him as members of the King's choir. Because if Jesus wept, perhaps we can too.

Let's pray. Amen. O Lord, you are the God who saves us, broken and weary, weak and unstable.

Help us realize it's okay to feel darkness from time to time. Thank you for honest to God words like these. I want to pray specifically for those for whom this psalm is not just foreign as feelings, but familiar, all too familiar.

Would you help them, us, all of us together, to experience Jesus, the man of sorrows, further in and further on in our darkness.

We thank you that you are not a God who avoids our cries. You welcome them. And so, as we respond in worship, we respond both in lament and in praise.

[ 42 : 15 ] We thank you, Lord. We pray all these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen.