

Good evening everybody! Welcome to the manse and to Tuesday Evening Sermon. It's great to have you with us. Thanks for putting in the time to be here and to dig more into God's Word. I pray as we do so you'll hear the voice of God, he will speak to you through this time as you give him space to speak to you through his word. After tonight's Tuesday evening sermon there will be the opportunity to dig into this a little bit more. One way to do that is to download some discussion questions from our website from the sermons page there or you can do that as well as join in the Jitsi discussion room and if you're wanting to join that, if you don't have the details, then just put a little message in the live chat tonight or put something on our Facebook page, drop me an email or a text message if you've got my details and I'll get you details so that you can then get on to the Jitsi discussion tonight and join in with that discussion as people wrestle with some questions up to about 9 o'clock and so join in if you are able. So let's crack open our Bibles, let's open our Bible apps and turn to Psalm 130 and it will be read for us once more by Sandra Anderson. Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our Redeemer. O come, Holy Spirit, come close to us now. Let us hear the voice of Jesus and see the heart of our Heavenly Father, that we would be captivated afresh, spurred into the life that you have for us individually and collectively as a body of your people here in Brightons, and for any who join us beyond, Lord, give them an equal and greater blessing even, we pray, for we ask it in your name. Amen. So Psalm 130 a really amazing Psalm, one of the songs of ascent, sometimes called a lament Psalm as well because of you know elements it has that seem to speak of lament, of crying out from the depths as the psalmist says in verse 1. And as you'll have heard on Sunday, I focused particularly on a few verses and so had to skip over various other parts and so today, tonight, we're going to build on Sunday, we're going to look at some of the words and phrases that we didn't really have space or time to get into, but then also as always try to see well what does that mean for our individual and our corporate lives as a church family, and so I pray, really do pray, that this will be a blessing, knowing God might speak to us through this time. One of the first words I want to look at is in verse 3. The psalmist says, 'If you Lord kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?' and the word 'sins' there is the Hebrew word *avon*, and it's much more than just a list of wrongdoing, *avon* has a sense of both the actions and then the consequences that come from that, the damage that results from our actions, from our *avon*. And it's kind of the picture of a flood which just carries us along and from which there is no escape and it just wreaks destruction after destruction, and it's not just the instantaneous effect that a flood has, but then the ongoing effect and how that detrimentally impacts a life or a group of lives. Imagine a village being struck by a flood and the consequences that has for years, generations even sometimes. And that's the idea here behind *avon*. Not just our little wrongdoings, our misdemeanours, our mis-steps, but our way of life that has repercussions beyond us and affecting beyond us. And so that's the first word to bear in mind here and from this, from sins, from *avon*. the psalmist says the only escape is through the Lord's, verse 7 he calls out to the group of people that are joining him in worship and the psalmist says: 'Israel put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.' This idea of full redemption is a powerful phrase, full of meaning, it's so very rich and it's much more than simply forgiveness, much more than God saying you are forgiven. It is a freeing from that flood, it is a lifting of a burden so that we might be whole and know life in all its fullness. It is often used in reference to the exodus of God's people from the the slavery of Egypt and so redemption means to free something or someone from slavery, from bondage and to

do so by paying a price, by buying that freedom. And this is what is also with the Lord, not only forgiveness but Redemption with the Lord, with Yahweh is forgiveness but this forgiveness brings redemption for it is also with him, it is part of his character, his heart, that he wants life for us and life in all its fullness. But to reach that place the psalmist says the people and he are to wait, to put their hope in him. This 'wait' and 'hope' are synonymous really in the Psalm and in many Psalms, they're much the same, to wait with eager and active anticipation that God will do something, that God will step in, he'll break in, he'll lead us on a path through, in the case of Israel and the Exodus a path through the waters, he will create a way to lead us into that new life and so he waits, he waits upon the Lord, he waits upon the Lord to speak. He says in verse 5, 'I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits and in his word I will put my hope.' We think again of the Exodus and the people trapped at the Red Sea fleeing for their lives and now trapped, unsure where to go, and then God speaks. He says to Moses 'lift up your staff', and the way is open for them into new life. His word came and it brought that freedom, that redemption, that way into life and all its fullness. And the psalmist knows from God's dealings with his people and what he has revealed in his word that he can be waited upon, and he will be faithful to speak, to act to bring them through, and so he waits for the Lord to do so, to speak and to act. And he is confident of this because not only with the Lord is there forgiveness, not only with the Lord is there full redemption, with the Lord there is unfailing love. Verse 7 again, 'Israel put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love.' That idea for unfailing love is the word in Hebrew hesed, hesed. I've mentioned it a number of times. It's a really rich, important biblical word, it's one of those words we really need to cling on to and become aware of and really, when we see it, our antennae should be going every time, because it speaks of God's covenant love, his steadfast love, a love which just doesn't give up, it's unflinching in its faithfulness, it is loyal beyond our comprehension, a love which God demonstrated so often to his people despite their rebellion. It's a love that just does not give up, an 'unfailing love' as it's translated here in the NIV. And those are the key words that I want to bring out for us tonight from this, avon sins, 'redemption' as full redemption, this idea of waiting actively with anticipation and hope for the Lord to speak because he is also the God of hesed, unfailing love, covenant love, his loving faithfulness. The Psalm gives us that encouragement, that provocation almost, to anticipate more of God, to anticipate an encounter with God, a knowing of God that is more than just of the mind; yes it will affect the mind, but it will be more than the mind, it will speak to our hearts and our souls and it will be with forgiveness and with steadfast love and with full abundant redemption. And in all this we see that the character of God is neither bent against us, nor is God just neutral in his justice and righteousness, and so often people get that misconception of God that God is just one or other of these. He's against us or is very neutral, distant, kind of standoffish, God-in-the-sky, old man with beard picture. But this Psalm, with God's heart for forgiveness, with God's heart of unfailing love and redemption, this is a God who bends and leans towards us, and so yes, the psalmist waits, he waits with anticipation, he waits with hope, and don't we find that same God described in the New Testament, revealed in the life and action of Jesus. Take for example one of our most famous verses, the one which our children and young people focused on in their activities for the service on Sunday morning, John 3:16: 'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.' 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.' He gave, he made every effort he held nothing back, and so Paul in the book of Romans and chapter 8, Paul can say in verse 31: 'What then shall we say in response to these

things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?.' Graciously lead us into full redemption, life in all its fullness. Jesus said in John chapter 10: 'I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.' Life in its fullness. Of course, Paul says in the very same book, Romans, that we wait for the redemption, for full redemption, the redemption of our bodies that has been secured for us, but we don't experience it yet, and so we have a foretaste of that through the gift of the Holy Spirit. But we have that still full redemption to wait for but it is there, it is guaranteed and will be ours. and so we begin our journey towards wholeness, towards life, towards full redemption because of a God, our Lord, who comes with full forgiveness, who comes with unfailing love, hesed, love. He comes with full redemption. And you know like this idea of talking about forgiveness is not comfortable. I don't even find it comfortable and there are times when we probably want to talk about just about anything else and we've not been trained, I've talked said this so often, I think I said it last time, we've not been trained in discipleship, we've not been trained to share our faith and to invite people in to know the life that God has promised. That terrifies us and so like I had to step out in faith on Sunday and issue that call to forgiveness and invite people to know the forgiveness through Jesus. That is still scary for me, that was not part of my training, it's not been part of my upbringing as a Christian, it's something I just know that I need to do, but if it wasn't for God like last week in my quiet times just mentioning it again and again through my devotions I probably would have bottled it, but he was very clear and so I stepped out. and there's that question I guess, it comes to mind of, 'Oh God, do we need to talk about this again?' and 'God is this really even relevant for everyone?' because there are voices within society, sadly there are voices within the church which sometimes say, 'Well this idea that everybody needs forgiveness, well not really sure on that front', and you know I found a really helpful passage in some reading I was doing at the weekend that kind of puts another perspective on this, maybe phrases this in ways that are unfamiliar with us but which maybe resonate better with our generation, so I want to read you it so that you can hear it, kind of follow along with me as I journey in faith and what I'm digging into, and it's a passage from a book I mentioned recently, 'Dangerous Wonder' by Mike Iaconelli. I'm beginning to read through it again with my friend Gordon. It's 'the adventure of childlike faith' and so sit back, get comfortable and let me read this couple of pages to you, not chapters, you'll be glad to hear! Don't try to hold on to every words but get the sense of what he is speaking because so much of what is mentioned in this and another little section I'd like to read to you, echoes this Psalm I think. 'There is deep within all of us a voice. It speaks to us continuously, knocking on the door of our consciousness. When we are children the voice is very loud, as it was with me, shattering our awareness with overwhelming clarity. Its loudness is not like a train or jet engine; it shouts to us with a whisper; it is like the wind breezing through a field of daisies, scattering their petals across the sky into a flower snowstorm; it is like a thousand flutes echoing in the middle of the forest. This voice of our childhood is the voice of wonder and amazement, the voice of God which has always been speaking to us even before we were born. One sad day we are aware of an absence, we can no longer hear the God voice and we are left with only silence; not a quiet silence but a roaring silence. Indeed God kept on speaking We did not want to stop hearing, but our lives became louder; the increasing crescendo of our possessions, the ear-piercing noise of busyness and the soul-smothering volume of our endless activity drowned out the still small voice of God. Most of us cannot say when it happened, we only know that it happened. When

we became aware of the absence of God's voice there were a thousand deaths within us. Idealism and innocence died first and across the scarred terrain of our souls one could see the withered remains of dreams, spontaneity, poetry, passion and ourselves, our real selves, the persons we were made to be. What happened; what happened to our aliveness? How could we grow up, accumulate 12 to 15 years of education or more, get married, have children, work for decades and never really live? How could we begin our lives with clarity and passion, wonder and spontaneity, yet so quickly find ourselves at the middle or end of our lives dull and bleary-eyed, listless and passionless? The death of the soul is never quick; it is a slow dying, a succession of little deaths that continues until we wake up one day on the edge of God's voice, on the fringe of God's belovedness, beyond the adventure of God's claim on our lives. We become lost. It took me 50 years to realize I was lost. No one knew I was lost, my life had all the trappings of foundness. I was a pastor, for heaven's sake! I'd spent 25 years in church related ministry and most of my days were consumed with writing or talking about Jesus, and yet I was lost, confused, soul-weary, thirsty and bone tired. I had succeeded at mimicking aliveness, but I was nearly dead.' Friends, this echoes the place I think so many people find themselves in, maybe even so many of us in the church at times, echoes very much and in a much more modern day the experience of John Wesley which I spoke about on Sunday. A lostness. I wonder instead of saying to people, 'Do you, do you see your sins and how you need forgiveness,' I wonder whether we say, 'Do you know the voice of God? Do you know the voice of God?' People might say they don't know what you're talking about and maybe that leads to a conversation then about sin, because he doesn't deny sin, and he goes on to talk about it and clearly the scriptures talk about sin, but he speaks of this scarred terrain of our souls, the weathered remains of dreams and x, y & z and echoes that avon that flood which sweeps us along and we lose the voice, the reality, the relationship, the dynamic intimate relationship with God that we were made to have. And so yes, everyone needs forgiveness, because everyone at some stage or another ends up on the edge of God's voice, on the fringe of God's belovedness, and they need to hear his voice calling them home. The question is, are we convinced of this, are we convinced of this enough to live a life that in Mike's words, is dangerous. I want to read you another little bit that just hits me between the eyes and hopefully it'll do the same for you. 'The critical issue today is dullness. We have lost our astonishment. The good news is no longer 'good news', it is 'okay news'. Christianity is no longer life-changing, it is life enhancing. Jesus doesn't change people into wild-eyed radicals anymore, he changes them into nice people. If Christianity is simply about being nice, I'm not interested. What happened to radical Christianity, the un-nice version of Christianity that turned the world upside down? What happened to the category smashing, life-threatening, anti-institutional gospel that spread through the first century like wildfire and was considered, by those in power, dangerous? What happened to the kind of Christians whose hearts were on fire, who had no fear, who spoke the truth no matter what the consequence, who made the world uncomfortable, who were willing to follow Jesus wherever he went? What happened to the kind of Christians who were filled with passion and gratitude and who everyday were unable to get over the grace of God. The greatest enemy of Christianity may be people who say they believe in Jesus but who are no longer astonished and amazed.' I'm reminded of a song by DC Talk, called 'Jesus Freak' and in there they have this little quote by someone I can't remember who it was, but the quote goes something like this, that the most powerful voice against Christianity sometimes are Christians who live in such a way that it seems to deny what Jesus has done, and that that has any

relevance for the rest of the world. And so that question that I asked on Sunday: are we convinced of the truths that are in this Psalm and how that is then carried on into the New Testament, that we have a God who wants to offer us forgiveness but forgiveness isn't the goal, its forgiveness into something else, into reverence and then service; but it's not a lifeless, boring religiosity, and the Westminster Confession puts it that 'the goal of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever'. Enjoy God! And so that service is that invitation into a 'dangerous wonder', as Mike Iaconelli says, a 'full redemption' as the Psalm talks about, us enjoying God as the Westminster Confession did. And is that, are we passionate about that, are we convinced of that, are we giving our all to that, are we willing to travel 250,000 miles on horseback to preach 40,000 sermons. I'm only on sermon about a hundred and sixty. I have no idea and that's from all my training and time as a youth pastor, I'm only on sermon about a hundred and sixty or something maybe even less than that and he did forty thousand! So, are we convinced, are we passionate, are we, are we ready to follow Jesus wherever he might lead, to make known, to invite people into this and you know this is so crucial the I'm glad the strategy group kind of stumbled and then took it up and then came across this this quote from a Church of Scotland report called 'The Church Without Walls Report', which was written a number of years ago now and which the church really hasn't done very much with, but in there, the report talks about what the church understands to be the core purpose of the church and it's what the strategy group propose should be the possible purpose of Brighton's parish church, to invite encourage and equip people as disciples of Jesus Christ. We've not come up with anything new, it's clearly based on the scriptures and it's been endorsed by the Church of Scotland General Assembly, so how can we really argue with it? Although we do want you to engage with it at the strategy group, but its core and so there's that invitation and there's that equipping so that we might know how to go and and invite people into that and equip them and and help them reach that full redemption. And so in our values, our values are kind of like the, well, there's the purpose, but what does that look like and what does that look like in Brightons and help us put some flesh on the bones for that and that's what the values are about and I won't give you them all just now so as not to spoil all the fun, so get involved in the focus groups if you want to, but within there we speak of wholeness through redemption, we speak of experience of knowing God and so waiting on the Lord, hoping in his word, expecting God to speak and to meet with us. You know we speak of sharing, sharing our life, sharing the good news, sharing what we have and who we are with our church family but also way beyond that. We speak of maturing, of being able to hear and know the voice of God and having the courage and the boldness to follow wherever that voice leads us, follow with a dangerous wonder, that we might participate in in the life and the mission of God in this world, and know it for ourselves and be a group of Christians who are not just ticking the box and not just getting through life and not just doing the nice things, but who really take God's Word and his gospel so seriously, captivated by it so powerfully, that we will live that dangerous calling that he calls us to. Maybe be known as people that are anything but boring, they follow the Living God wherever he goes or wherever he calls because we're tuning in to the voice of God, this God who with him comes forgiveness and unending love and full redemption. I pray that we may know that God for ourselves and we may make that God known in our time and in our place. May it be so. Amen. Will you join me in prayer, let us pray: Our God and Heavenly Father, we praise you that you are the God of hesed love, unending love and who leads us on a journey towards full redemption, a redemption that is sure and certain, secured for us by

Jesus, and we praise you, Jesus, for your great love that took you to the cross, that saw you lean into that and face it unflinching that we might know life and life and all its fullness. You, Jesus were killed for me, for us. You were pinned to that cross because of my sin, my avon, and Jesus that breaks our heart that you were pinned there to die for me and I praise you and sit in wonder of you Jesus, and tell you that because you first loved me I love you now and I want to give my life in service of you. I want to live in holy fear and reverence of you and to be unflinching as far as I'm able by the power of your spirit to follow in that life of dangerous wonder, to share in your mission to make you known, to invite people into relationship with you that they might hear the voice of God for themselves and by so doing also begin that journey towards full redemption. Heavenly Father lead us, lead us individually and as a group of your people into your plan and purposes for us now, here, give us wisdom and discernment, give us boldness and courage and passion. Lord, may we be anything other than the Christians described by Mike Iaconelli, of dullness and just being apathetic to the gospel and unconvinced, and Lord save us from that. And so I yield, we yield ourselves to you, Lord, that you might lead us in your way. We pray that prayer together now as Jesus taught his disciples, saying in one voice: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever. Amen. Friends thanks for joining us tonight for our Tuesday evening sermon. We'll be back live on Thursday evening for live prayer at 8:15; join us either in our zoom room and email us if you don't have the details for that; if you need technical help getting connected please do get in touch; try and join a little bit before 8:15 as well just in case there are any issues if it's your first time; or get us on YouTube channel where we'll be streaming Live the prayers as we bring them towards others and if you've got any prayer requests please do get them in via the live chat, via Facebook page or email. Get in touch and we'll gladly bring your prayers before our God and Heavenly Father. We'll be back on Sunday Morning, as well this Sunday we have the Sunday school closing service where there'll be great input from our young people and leaders, so join us then if you're able and as you go from here may the blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you this night and forevermore. Amen.