



## WEEK TWO: Psalm 116

### Eastertide The Resurrection Life: A Brief Introduction

In the church calendar, Easter (or Eastertide) continues until Pentecost (seven weeks after Easter, May 24). It is a period in which Christians are encouraged to reflect on the joy, transformation, and celebration of the resurrection.

During this series we will be following the lectionary readings (The lectionary is a three-year cycle of readings with four readings assigned to each Sunday; one from the gospels, one from the epistles, one from the psalms, and, usually, one from another part of the Old Testament.). The preachers each week will choose one or more of the texts as the basis of the reflections on the resurrection life.

The lectionary readings for this series are in the table below. If you would like more information you can use the following link to learn more: <https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-6-YearA-UCA-Lectionary.pdf>

Date	First Reading	Psalm	Second Reading	Gospel
April 12	Acts 2:14a, 22-32	Psalm 16	1 Peter 1:3-9	John 20:19-31
April 19	Acts 2:14a, 36-41	Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19	1 Peter 1:17-23	Luke 24:13-35
April 26	Acts 2:42-47	Psalm 23	1 Peter 2:19-25	John 10:1-10
May 3	Acts 7:55-60	Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16	1 Peter 2:1-10	John 14:1-14
May 10	Acts 17:22-31	Psalm 66:8-20	1 Peter 3:13-22	John 14:15-21
May 17	Acts 1:6-14	Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35	1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11	John 17:1-11
May 24	Acts 2:1-21 OR Numbers 11:24-30	Psalm 104:24-34, 35b	1 Corinthians 12:3b- 13 OR Acts 2:1-21	John 20:19-23 OR 7:37-39

## Sermon Outline:

### A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

#### Key Text(s): Psalm 116

Psalm 116 is part of the Egyptian Hallel – a series of psalms (113-118) that are read to commemorate the Exodus, nearly all of which include the phrase, "Praise the Lord" (or Hallelujah). This thanksgiving psalm is traditionally read during Passover, before the fourth cup – the cup of salvation (see v. 13) – is shared.

More generally it is part of Book V of the Psalter (Pss. 107-150) whose primary theme is thanks for the Lord's goodness (see Psalm 107:1-3). Some scholars believe that the five books of the Psalter are meant to correspond to the five books of the Law and reflect five periods of Israel's history; the last linked to the post-exilic period; a cultural and political "resurrection" of sorts for Israel.

The exodus (and the return from exile) is Israel's 'origin story'. Like superhero origin stories where a radioactive spider bite is the origin of Spiderman, the exodus explains the people of Israel; their purpose, values, and behaviours.

As we read this psalm we are invited to consider our own origin story in the resurrection of Jesus and the kind of life that this origin story leads to.

The psalm opens with a declaration of love to the Lord (though in the Hebrew 'the Lord' is absent) because he heard the voice of the psalmist. The threefold repetition of the Lord's attentive (and isn't it amazing that the Lord is attentive to us; actively listening to us!) is matched by a threefold repetition of the danger the psalmist faced: entangled by the cords of death, overshadowed by the grave, and overwhelmed by sorrow. Due to the danger and the divine attentiveness the psalmist called on the name of the Lord.

In the story of Israel the catalyst for the exodus is their cry for help being heard by God, who remembered his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:23-25; 3:7-9; 4:29-31). They were also unable to rescue themselves; they were entangled in the cords of death. And this is important. Robert Farrar Capon says that Jesus has come to resurrect us, but that the pre-condition for this is that we be dead! Instead of trying to save our lives, we must embrace our death (see Mark 8:35). Our salvation, then, is a new lease on life – life we shouldn't have – and our behaviour should be marked by the gratitude of a second chance!

The exodus motif continues in verse 4 where the psalmist describes God in his own words (see Exodus 34:6-7) before speaking of the Lord's providential care of 'the unwary'. This may very well include a faint echo of the Balaam stories when the Lord protected Israel from Balaam's curse unbeknownst to Israel. It also has allusions to wisdom literature where 'the unwary' is usually translated as 'the simple'. The simple are those who, left to their own devices, will become fools but who, if they listen to instruction, may become wise. Here it is the Lord who protects them. Verse 6 concludes with a reference to the reversals that are typical of God's work; saving those who have been humbled (see Psalm 113).

After a refrain on the Lord's goodness (v. 7) the psalmist reflects on the Lord's past actions (again in a set of three) before a final reflection that does not have include an act of rescue but only a declaration of trust in the Lord. This willingness to trust the Lord rather than the deceitful voices that surround us is made with an eye to the future.

This leads neatly to another refrain on God's goodness and the question, "What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?" (v. 12) Given the origin story of the psalmist and of the people, what kind of life ought they seek to live?

The essence of that life is one of public gratitude. This is made explicit in verse 14b, 18b, and 19 and is implied in the language of offerings which were always public (often a sacrifice was a chance for a meal together as the meat needed to be eaten quickly). The description of himself as the Lord's servant (as his mother was – women played a key role in wisdom literature and it may be that his mother was part of the Lord's

providential protection of the simple!) is both public – a servant of the Lord is not a personal, individual or private thing, but is being a servant in public to advance the purposes of God in the world.

The image of lifting the cup of salvation is quite striking. It might be useful to think of it as a toast. We've all seen a toast – and perhaps have given one. Everyone lifts a glass and drinks to the health and success of the one toasted. In this psalm, it is the Lord who we are toasting. It is a public declaration of what God has done for us and asking others to join us in honouring him.

This psalm encourages us to consider our origin story in God – for us, the resurrection – and to consider how our lives reflect that story, especially in relation to public gratitude.

What would your toast to the Lord be?

## Questions to Ask

1. Psalm 116 is rooted in Israel's "origin story" of the Exodus. How does your own "origin story" in the resurrection of Jesus shape the way you see your identity, purpose, and daily life?
2. The psalmist describes being "entangled by the cords of death" before calling on the Lord. Why is it important to recognise our inability to save ourselves, and how does that shape our understanding of grace?
3. The sermon highlights God's attentiveness—his willingness to hear and respond. How have you experienced God's attentiveness in your life, and how does that influence your prayer life?
4. Verse 12 asks, "What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?" What might a life of response look like for you personally, beyond just words or feelings?
5. Gratitude in this psalm is public, not private. Why do you think public expressions of faith and thanksgiving matter, and what might that look like in your context?
6. The image of "lifting the cup of salvation" is compared to a toast. If you were to give a "toast to the Lord," what specific things would you celebrate and invite others to recognise about him?

## A Prayer to Pray

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God – perhaps after each person has shared a salvation toast to the Lord.

## A Practice to Try

Keep a gratitude journal this week. At some point each day, reflect on the goodness of God and write a brief toast to the Lord.

## Readings to Read This Week

Read the remaining texts from the lectionary and reflect on how they interact with each other on the themes of the resurrection life (see the Table above).

## A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

One of our values is to be Big-Hearted; generous in every way. It is one of the characteristics of gratitude. Consider how you might enlarge your response to others this week. This might be an intentional attitude at work or home, it might take the form of a one off financial gift to someone or to a charity or ministry, it might be a willingness to consider others and serve them as a reflection of what God has done for you, or it may be an act of forgiveness.

## A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. On Sunday May 17 we will be launching an Alpha group. The group will meet during our regular church service time. If you have a friend who you think might be ready to explore faith in this setting, make sure you speak to Adam Stewart about getting involved (along with your friend).