

Good Friday Service

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[0 : 00] We've already begun to hear in our service this morning. Good Friday is an uncomfortable day in the church calendar. It forces us to look at and dwell on and sit in the midnight passages of the Bible.

Verse 33. And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lemna sabachthani. Which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Some of the bystanders hearing it said, the Holy is calling Elijah. And some ran and filled the sponge with sour wine, putting it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink, saying, wait, let us see whether Elijah will come and take him down.

And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly this man was the son of God.

Feels like a paradox, doesn't it? We call it Good Friday. And yet, the subject that we consider leaves us feeling anything but good.

[1 : 41] There isn't anywhere else in all of history or in any other circumstances where the unjust sentencing and the barbaric killing of an innocent man is considered good news. But what I want us to see this morning, as we focus on one phrase uttered from the lips of Jesus, is that the day is not actually misnamed.

Nor is there any sense of irony when we call it Good Friday. Here's the verse. Eloi, Eloi, lemna sabachthani, which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

It's become known in the church as the cry of dereliction. And it's these words, actually, that depict for us the goodness. Good Friday.

What we have in those words is Jesus' account of his commentary on what is going on when he's hanging on the cross. The New Testament gives us four Gospels, you'll know that.

It gives us four accounts of what the authors think is important for us to know. This is what each of the authors, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, what we have there is what they think is what we need to know about the life, death, resurrection and ministry of Jesus.

[2 : 59] There are four different perspectives on historical events, each with their own emphases. One common thread that they devote to their work is a disproportionate amount of time to the death of Jesus.

Over one third of the Gospel narrative is given over to this event. In this cry we have actually what Jesus thinks is important for us to know.

We have his account of this horrific death. And he does this by quoting Psalm 22. It was read for us earlier. If you can turn back to page 457 in the Church Bible.

Psalm 22 expounds the significance and the intent of the cross of Christ. Like any rabbi of the period, what Jesus is doing as he says those words, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Is giving us, he's quoting a part so that we would read the whole. It's like a hyperlink in an online article. You know when you see that little bit, it's underlined and highlighted.

[4 : 04] And it says a few words that are part of the whole thing. And you click on it and the whole thing opens up. We're supposed to click on it to read the whole. So when we go to Psalm 22, what we see there is that this is a psalm we're told of David.

David, the superscription to the choir master according to the dawn of the psalm of David. These are the cries of God's King in a particular time and place in history.

Now we don't know what those circumstances were. But we do know how he's feeling. Verse 1, he feels abandoned by God because he is suffering in the face of opposition. The poem, the psalm,

was written as the experience of God's anointed king all those years ago. And while it was his experience, it would also be taken up and sung by God's people in times of suffering and struggle. When they turned to the psalms in their life together. When they gathered and times were hard and they were struggling, they would have opened up Psalm 22. And they would have sung it as an expression of their cry to God in their own difficult experience. The words, of course, are also prophetic. As we know, Jesus takes them up on his lips on the cross to describe his experience.

[5 : 18] Both of his suffering and of his victory. Although we dwell in the suffering today, this cry has Easter Day in view. The last verse in the original just says, Finish.

And the focus is on how Christ has not risen and reigning the Lord. We'll get there on Sunday. But first, let's consider the fact that the first 21 verses of Psalm 22 have a kind of back and forth structure.

Did you notice that as it was read? So verses 1 and 2, you get the cry. Then verse 3, yet you.

Verses 6 to 8, I'm a worm.

I'm scorned and despised. Verse 9, have a look. Yet you. Verse 12, many bulls encompass me. Strong bulls.

My heart is melting. I can count my bones. 12 to 18. 19, look at verse 19. But you, O Lord. There is great suffering.

[6 : 20] But there is no loss of faith throughout. So when it comes to considering this cry of forsakenness. This agonizing moment of grief.

We need to understand what is and what is not going on. Eloi, Eloi. Lema sabachthani. My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me? Christ is given up by God.

But verse 1, Psalm 22, second half. They explain what this forsakenness means. Why are you so far from saving me?

He's saying, I cry out to you, but you don't seem to listen. I cry out and all I can hear back is silence. Sounds a lot like Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, doesn't it?

Father, take this cup from me. Silence. Yet he still believes in the Father. Verses 3 to 5.

[7 : 21] Yet you are holy. Enthroned in the places of Israel. Talking about the history of Israel. He hasn't been abandoned. Because God doesn't abandon his people.

That's the story of the Old Testament. God is faithful to his people. Through all of their history, God has acted for his people. Verses 6 to 8.

He is, yes, being shamed and mocked. You know this is what happens just before the crucifixion.

You remember the soldiers laughing, walking in Jesus. Wrapping him in a purple robe.

And saying, well, go on then, king. Making the crown of thorns. And rudely pushing it onto his head. Yes, you're the king. Ha, ha, ha. Remember they said, he saved others.

Can't save himself. Can't save himself. We go back to verse 9. He recalls the history of God's faithfulness to his people.

[8 : 19] His God is a personal God. Do you know you have been my God. My God. Verse 10. He is the father of Israel. Verse 10. In 12 to 18.

Beasts are tearing him to shreds. His mouth is dried up. He's thirsty. Verse 18. They gamble for his clothes. This is what happens in the crucifixion.

And yet again. 19 to 21. He entrusts himself to God. But you, O Lord. Do not be far off. O you, my help. Come quickly to my aid.

Deliver my soul from the sword. My precious life from the power of the dog. Save me. He's calling on God. This is what's going on in this cry on Good Friday.

Jesus is enduring all of this pain. The physical agony. The emotional torment. The personal humiliation. But what does this forsakenness mean? For the son's relationship to his father.

[9 : 18] Yes, he is experiencing all of this suffering. But what is going on? It's an important question. Because it's common in our day to assume. That the cross represents some kind of rupture.

In the Trinity. Some of our songs we've even sung on this morning. Speak like this. Tis finished. The Messiah dies. Cut off for sins. How great the pain of searing loss.

The father turns his face away. We need to make sure that our poetry. When we sing it. Describes reality. The father didn't turn his face away. In any sense of rejection.

Christ was not cut off. From the father. In any way that affected the being of God. God. Read this recently in a commentary. On Psalm 22.

Quote. At the moment the father. At that moment the father truly turned his back on him. Forsaking him. It is an eternal mystery how this could happen. The perfect unity of the Trinity was broken for a moment.

[10:20] As God the father turned away from God the son. That is impossible. In a mainstream evangelical. Performed evangelical. Bible commentary. That is impossible. Jesus says in John 10.

I and the father are one. Heard others say that for those six hours in the darkness. The father no longer loved the son. That is impossible.

Jesus says the very reason. Quote John 10. The reason my father loved me. Is that I lay down my life. The reason for the father's love is this suffering and death. So what is happening?

The commentator says this. This is no statement of despair. This is no cry of utter and total abandonment. There is no hint of a settled or even strained relationship. Between the father and the son.

There is no sense here of a father who has rejected his son. In fact it is hard to see why such a view could even be compatible. With the last words of Jesus. We heard them in Paul's prayer a moment ago. In Luke's account.

[11:22] Father into your hands I commit my spirit. These are words of deep relational intimacy. Jesus addresses him as father. They are words of complete trust.

What we see here is an expression of the closest imaginable spiritual communion. So physically. Physically. Physically.

At the cross. Physically the son is abandoned to the horrendous death of crucifixion. The full humanity of Christ. Is crushed for our sins. This is the punishment our sin required.

If we would be forgiven. And he took it. Emotionally. He is alone. And he is experiencing the terrible darkness of divine judgment.

But also. While there is yes. Deep and profound mystery here. We must recognize that this cry is designed to draw our attention to the whole of Psalm 22.

[12:19] And in these moments. Jesus is identifying with the distress of the unjust sufferer. He is standing in the face of scorn and torition.

He is broken. He is pierced. He is crushed. He is embodying the experience of the psalmist. Psalm 22.

So on the cross. That first good Friday. Jesus Christ. The son of God. The anointed Lord. Bears our sin. And the divine curse that it desires. He does that according to his human nature.

It is the God man who stands in our place. To bear all of the wrath of God. That our sin demands. But he does this in unbroken fellowship with the father.

Who. Psalm 22 verse 24. Has not hidden his face from him. That is her when he cried to him. The father who.

[13:22] Verse 27. Psalm 22. All the ends of the earth. Will remember. The one who threw the atoning death of Christ. That atonement that is being accomplished. At the very moment that he cries out those words.

Verse 27. He is turning people to himself. He is leading families of the nations to worship. He is accomplishing the ultimate victory. Over Satan and death. That is why New Friday is good.

This is why we shouldn't brush over it. Or push through the darkness in order to get to Sunday.

Because Jesus fulfilled this psalm. So that we wouldn't have to cry these words ourselves.

John Flavio puts it like this. My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me? If Jesus had not said these words. We must have howled out this hideous complaint. In the lowest hell forever.

Jesus Christ cried these words from the cross. So that you. For all eternity. Don't have to. See left to ourselves.

[14:33] We deserve to be completely forsaken by God. Completely cut off. Having turned his face away from us. For all eternity. To remove the presence of all of his blessings from us.

For all eternity. That's what we deserve left to ourselves. But because Christ went there in our place. We may never utter these words. And that's true.

Even when our day to day experience. Causes us to doubt that that's a reality. When the darkness closes in around us.

In our day to day lives. We can identify with David here. When he calls out. Those moments when. Often longer than moments.

When we feel forsaken by God. In our experience. Calvin speaking on Psalm 22 verse 1 comments. There is not one of the godly. Who does not daily experience in himself.

[15 : 30] The same thing. According to the judgment of the flesh. That is according to the way we feel. In our own bodies. He thinks he is cast off and forsaken by God. I get you.

If I'm for hands by faith. The grace of God. Which is hidden from the eye of sense and reason. We know what it's like to feel like. The grace of God is hidden from the eye of the sense of reason. When we step into the darkness of Good Friday. What we discover is that. Because Christ experienced this forsakenness in our lives.

We cannot ever experience it. Because he drank the dregs of the cup of God's wrath. There is none left for us.

Do you know that? I know that for some of you. Darkness is a close companion. Even at the moment. Whatever the reason for that. And often. Part of the problem is that we don't know the reason.

[16 : 31] We can't work out why we're experiencing things the way we are. We can't work it out. That's part of the problem. But whatever the reason might be. Allow Good Friday. This Good Friday. To remind you of what the reason definitely isn't.

And the reason cannot be the forsakenness of God. In fact. I want to encourage you. To bring your darkness.

Into the darkness of Good Friday. And as you sit there. You will see actually that a way ahead has been moving for you.

If you turn back to Mark 15. For a moment. That's a very fair turn to start. Because it's in the darkness of Good Friday. Where we look ahead.

And we see that a way has been moving. Look at verse 37. Mark 15. Jesus uttered a loud cry. And breathed his lungs. And the heart of the temple was torn in two.

[17 : 31] From top to bottom. The heart of the temple was this. Dwelling place of God. That's where God was said to be present.

And when Jesus breathed his last. Mark doesn't tell us. What he said. John tells us what he says. And he gave it to Psalm 22. He cries out. What? Finished. The Messiah's work of coming to earth. To deal with our sin problem. Has been accomplished. So we have full and free access. Into the presence of God. The curtain has been torn. The barrier that kept us out of God's presence. Has been taken away. That's the way ahead. When we're in the darkness. We go to him in faith. We're reconciled to the name of God. As we go to him in faith. We are being restored to the humanity. That was intended for us at the beginning. But that was so terribly marred.

[18 : 33] Because of our rebellion. The humanity that Adam forfeited for us. Jesus has recovered. He's done that for all.

Who will turn to him. In repentance and freedom. Can I say. If this is new to you. That is the offer of the cross. That is the good news of the Christian faith. Forgiveness for every sin.

That you have ever committed. And reconciliation with the God. Who made you for himself. If that's you. Let me encourage you.

To turn your life over to him. To him. You can do it where you sit. In this moment. Reconciliation. With the God. Who made you for himself. Because of good pride.

If this is a reminder. As I expect it is. For most of us this morning. Don't let the familiarity. Of this day. The familiarity. Of this story.

[19 : 30] Years and years and years. Of hearing about it. And in churches like ours. Where we are cross-centered people. Don't let the familiarity. Of the story. Wash over you. Just another time. See again.

What it took. To deal with your sin. And marvel. That that price was paid. You are forgiven. You are free.

You are fully reconciled. With the God of all year. Worship. And glorify him for that. Tether your life. To that reality. Order what you understand.

As wisdom. And goodness. And beauty. To that point. Spurgeon said. Abide hard. By the cross. And search the mystery. Of his wounds.

It is a mystery. It is a mystery. That the son of God. Would do that. For me. And for you. When we consider. How we've treated him.

[20 : 31] And yet he has done that. He has covered every sin. Abide hard. By the cross. And search the mystery. Of his wounds. And as you do that. You'll.

Begin to become. Like the one. That you. Are staring at. And meditating on. Worshiping. It is as you abide. Hard by the cross. That you'll cultivate.

Humility. And servant heartless. And generosity. And all of those. Lovely qualities. That. In our best moments. We really want to. Love you.

Because those are the qualities. That make us like Christ. That by the heart. By the cross. See again. What it took. To deal with your sin. And marvel.

That it is what you've done. And if you're. In the dark. In your own life experience. This morning. Take your struggles and griefs.

[21 : 28] To the darkness of Good Friday. And when you do that. Here in this cry. In this sound. In Psalm 22. Find hope. Because there's hope there for you.

Psalm 22. Tells us that. Whatever you're going through. Whether you're scorned. By mankind.

Whether you're despised. By people. And that's the experience. For many of us. In work.

At school. Boys and girls. In the family. Perhaps. In the wider family. Because you name the name of Christ. You're mocked. What place does this silly. Christian faith. That you believe in.

Have in. In this enlightened world today. Despised. Mocked. Ridicule. If you feel like you're surrounded. By strong bulls. Or lions.

Pursuing you. Because you're a Christian. That's what you're going through. There is hope for you. In your friend. It's true as well.

[22 : 26] For whatever might lie ahead. Whatever lies. And we don't know what's in our futures.

Whether there's physical suffering. Around the corner. Or the betrayal of others. Or hardship of any kind.

Remember. That the Lord. That the Lord. Has not. Despised. Or award. Your affliction. And at the end of the story.

Is victory. Because of your friend. One day. Psalm 22. The afflicted shall eat. And be satisfied. That is the future for all who are in Christ.

Keep trusting him. Keep fearing him. Living. Before him. In reverence. Keep pleasing him.