

We have been going through the gospel of Mark over the past few months, and this morning we are up to the crucifixion. Let's read Mark 15:21-47.

Mark 15:21-47 - A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. ²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). ²³ Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. ²⁵ It was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁷ They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁸ ²⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself!" ³² Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. ³³ At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." ³⁶ One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. ³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. ³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" ⁴⁰ Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there. ⁴² It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

What does the crucifixion mean? What is the significance of Jesus' death on the cross? Is it simply the death of a criminal? The unjust death of a good man? There are three significant elements from this passage that I want to focus on this morning. I think the best place to start is with Jesus' only statement in this passage: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani?", which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" How does this help us understand what is going on at the cross?

1) The forsaken Son

³⁴ *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

What was going on on that cross that would cause Jesus to say that? Remember the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus asked for the cup to pass from him. But in the end, he drank it down and was destroyed, taking the wrath of the Father on human sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21 - *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

On the cross, Jesus became sin. He took our sin and our punishment. He was separated from God. He did not call him "Father" but "My God, my God." On the cross, the Father turns away from the Son. Yes, crucifixion was the most agonizing and humiliating form of torture and death. But Luke barely mentions the details of it. Why? Because it was nothing compared to the suffering from being separated from the Father.

Isaiah 53:5-10 - *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.*

He did it so we might become the righteousness of God, so we might be God's perfect, beloved children.

Romans 5:6-9 - *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

God is a holy God, and someone needed to pay the penalty. Justice must be satisfied. The only way to bridge that gap was for the Son of God to live a perfect life and die a sacrificial death. On the cross he cries out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is the Son of God experiencing the abandonment of His Father. At that moment he drank the cup of God's wrath to the bottom, experiencing cosmic abandonment by the Father. At that moment the Passover Lamb was slain, so that His blood might shield you from death. He was cast into Hell, the absence of God. He was reaping the consequences of your sins. That should have been you up there. That grace and forgiveness did not come cheap. They may have been free to you, but they did not come cheap. They were earned by Jesus Christ. This is the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ.

It should have been you up there. But now you will never be separated from God, never be forsaken by Him.

2) The mocking crowd

The second thing to notice about this line of Jesus' – **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me** – is that it is a quote from **Psalm 22**. Let's read that so that we can understand what is going on here and what the crucifixion means. As we read, understand that for much of the Old Testament prophecies, they have more than one meaning. They meant something in David's time, who wrote it, but they have a deeper meaning that will be revealed at Jesus' crucifixion.

Psalm 22:1-31 - *For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? ² O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. ³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. ⁴ In you our fathers put*

their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. ⁵ They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. ⁷ All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." ⁹ Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. ¹⁰ From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. ¹¹ Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. ¹² Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. ¹³ Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. ¹⁹ But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. ²⁰ Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. ²¹ Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. ²² I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! ²⁴ For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. ²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows. ²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him-- may your hearts live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him-- those who cannot keep themselves alive. ³⁰ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. ³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn-- for he has done it.

Throughout this passage, Jesus is mocked:

⁷ All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

Mark 14:64 - They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵ Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him...

. ¹⁶ The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. ¹⁷ They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

²⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! ³² Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

What is behind this mocking? They are mocking Jesus because of the claims he has made. You said you could destroy the temple. You said you are the Christ. Why don't you come down from the cross? How can you be the Son of God?

Not only that, he was stripped naked on the cross – in all his shame. He was publicly humiliated.

Have you ever been mocked and shamed? Ever been publicly humiliated? Jesus knows. But he took the shame so that we would be eternally honored and loved.

Romans 8:15-16 - *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

Romans 8:1-2 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*

If only he was just a good teacher, no one would mock and insult him. But with the claims he made – that he would come on the clouds of heaven as the son of man,

that he could forgive sins, that he would rise from the dead – they laughed at him dying in weakness. People mock and insult Jesus for his claims, and they mock and insult Christians for those claims as well. They mock the claims, and they mock the apparent weakness. Let them mock. Little do they know that He is actually who He claims to be. And God works through weakness, not through worldly power.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

In the mocking, we see that Jesus works through weakness and suffering. The world may not understand, but that's how God works.

3) The torn curtain

³⁰ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. ³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn-- for he has done it.

³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. ³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

What does it mean that the curtain was torn in two?

The curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple was torn. The Holy of Holies was the place where God's spirit dwelt in the temple, and was entered once a year on the Day of Atonement by the high priest to make atonement for the sins of the people. With the death of Jesus, this dividing curtain has been torn, signifying two things: **first, that this sacrificial system of sacrificing animals to atone for sins has come to an end, and secondly that every believer now has unrestricted access to God and to forgiveness of sins.** It is finished means that the old way of getting right with God is gone, and that salvation has been offered once and for all by Jesus, and that all can have free access to God and the forgiveness of sins that He offers.

And as the curtain is torn in two, the Roman centurion says, “surely this man was the son of God.”

Look at this – the worst possible evil becomes the greatest possible good. Where is God when we are in pain? I don’t have all the answers. But we know it’s not that He doesn’t love us. Look to the cross. What looked like the greatest evil was really the greatest good. When God seemed the most absent, he was actually the most present.

***Romans 8:28-29** - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

This is the place to go to when you wonder where God is in your suffering, when you can not see anything good that could come out of your situation.

On the cross, Jesus took our sin, and the penalty for our sin, becoming the forsaken Son of God so that we might be restored to a right relationship with God. And now we can trust God even in our suffering, knowing that He is always working for good.