

## **“WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”**

Mark 15:33-47

Key Verse: 15:34

“And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ (which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’)”

Today’s passage tells of the most difficult time for Jesus--his last moment. Already he had endured an unjust trial. Though innocent, he was treated like a criminal. Then he was mocked and beaten by soldiers who placed a crown of thorns on his head. Finally, he was crucified on a cross. It was the most cruel, painful, shameful way to die. Yet none of these things made Jesus cry out in anguish. It was only in his final moment that Jesus cried. His cry reveals his greatest pain: it was to be forsaken by God. Why was Jesus forsaken? There is deep meaning in this event. We can learn great truths about God, about Jesus and about what God has done for us. It is vital for us to know God as he truly is. Some people say, “The God of the Old Testament is so cruel. He killed so many people. I refuse to believe in such a God.” Also, people wonder, “Where is God when there is so much suffering in the world? If God is good, why is there so much evil?” These questions all express doubt about God’s love. We can find the truth about God through Jesus’ cry from the cross. God is the God of love--suffering, holy love. Let’s think about the meaning of Jesus’ death and its profound impact.

First, the meaning of Jesus’ death (33-37). The author Mark tells us what happened at the time of Jesus’ death. Mark does not write emotionally or embellish the events, but simply states the facts. First of all, he tells us that darkness came over the whole land (33). Jesus was put on the cross at 9 am, and three hours later, at noon, a darkness came over the whole land. As the sun was shining brightest, it suddenly became dark. Why did this happen? Did God mourn Jesus’ death? Was God covering Jesus in his shame? Usually darkness symbolizes God’s judgment. In the time of the Exodus, God judged Egypt through 10 plagues. Just before the final plague--death for all firstborns--there was a plague of darkness that lasted for three days (Ex 10:21-23).

People could not see or move at all. It meant that God's judgment was imminent. As the plague of darkness warned Egyptians to repent of idolatry, so this sign of darkness warned Israel to repent their unbelief of the Messiah, Jesus (Am 8:9-10). When the religious leaders crucified Jesus, they thought that was the end of the matter. But it was not. They, and all Israel, bore the consequences of rejecting the Messiah, the Son of God. When Rome invaded in A.D. 70, many Israelites were killed. Others were scattered and became objects of scorn and hatred. The Jewish religious system collapsed and the nation vanished for 2,000 years. God's judgment is a reality. Those who reject Jesus will face God's judgment; it is serious.

The second fact the author Mark described was Jesus' cry from the cross. After six hours on the cross, Jesus' suffering reached a climax. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus cries out as he is forsaken by God. Jesus' words quote exactly Psalm 22:1, known as the cry of the righteous sufferer. Beginning with this cry, Psalm 22 describes the Messiah's suffering on the cross in detail: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment" (Ps 22:14-18). Jesus' suffering fulfilled this Psalm exactly. Jesus suffered according to the Scriptures. But Jesus did not cry out due to physical agony; he cried out when he was forsaken by God.

Until now, Jesus had borne all kinds of sufferings without saying anything. Jesus was mocked by the religious leaders, forsaken by the crowd, and abandoned by his beloved disciples. Jesus bore all of these sufferings silently. But he could not bear the spiritual anguish of being forsaken by God. Did God really forsake Jesus? Yes. God indeed had forsaken Jesus. But not eternally; it was only for a moment. Why was Jesus forsaken? It was because of our sins. Isaiah foretold, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6). Jesus was bearing our sins. As Paul said, "God made him who had

no sin to be sin for us..." (2Co 5:21a). In that moment, God renounced Jesus, turned away from him and let him die. There is a saying that no parent should have to bury their own child. To watch one's child suffer and die is unbearable. God the Father watched his only Son become sin and die on a cross for us. It is beyond imagination; it is God's long-suffering love.

God's long-suffering love for sinners is revealed throughout the Bible. We find it in the parable of the prodigal son. Though the son is spoiled, selfish, greedy and mean, the father entrusts his inheritance to him and permits him to go far away where he squanders it on wild living. Though the son abandoned his father, the father watched faithfully for his son to return. When the dirty, foolish, broken son comes to his senses and returns, the father runs to him, throws his arms around him and kisses him (Lk 15:20). Then the father fully restores his privileges as a son. Again, we see God's long-suffering love in the parable of the tenants (Mk 12:1ff.). This parable summarizes God's relationship with his people. Though God provided everything for them to live the most beautiful and fruitful lives, they ignored his existence and denied his ownership. When he sent prophets to call them back to him, they mistreated and killed them (Lk 11:50-51a). In spite of their long record of wicked behavior, God did not stop trying to restore their relationship. In fact, in an astounding act, he sent his Son to them, entrusting his Son's life in their hands. People have called this crazy love. It is not rational by our standard. But that is who God is. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son to save us. When God gave Jesus, he gave everything he could give for us. God's love is radically sacrificial. God's love is unconditional and unchanging. We should believe the truth about God, that he loves us no matter what condition or circumstance we may be in.

At the same time, God's love is holy love. Since God is holy, righteous and just, he does not condone or ignore sin. God judges sin according to his truth. The wages of sin is death (Ro 3:23). For sinners to be saved, someone had to pay the price. It was Jesus. Jesus' anguished cry tells us how costly it was. Jesus' cry from the cross reveals God's suffering, holy love which restores our relationship with him. We should believe God loves us with sacrificial, holy love. We should believe this based on the truth that Jesus cried from the cross and died in order to save us.

To accept God's love through Jesus' cross brings eternal salvation. As John 3:16 says, "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." One young woman was born into a home with an alcoholic father. He was unstable and became angry. Sometimes he beat her mother and sister. Later, her parents divorced. While in the courtroom, her father shouted, "You are ugly and unlovable!" The wound from his words cut deeply into her heart. She became wild and began to indulge her sinful desires. This made her more miserable until she began to cry out for God's help. Then she met a Christian woman who cared about her. They began to study the Bible together and she heard that God loved her. In fact, God loved her so much that he gave Jesus to die on the cross for her. The love of God flooded her heart like heavenly sunlight. She gained a sense of identity as a beloved child of God. She began to find the meaning of her life and hope for the future. She believes she can establish a beautiful family and serve God like her Bible teacher. What about you? Do you believe that God loves you? Or do you doubt God's love? Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

In Jesus' cry we can also see his obedience. Though God was willing to send his Son as our Savior, Jesus needed to decide to obey God's will. Jesus knew God's heart. The animal sacrifice in the Law was not sufficient to pay the price for human sin. Only the blood of the sinless Son of God would suffice. Through prayer, Jesus found strength to decide to die. But at the moment he was dying he experienced great pain, so he cried out. In this way he obeyed the will of God as our Savior. Though Jesus is in very nature God, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross (Php 2:6-8). Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." Jesus became our perfect Savior as he suffered to obey God unto death. In this way he became our source of eternal salvation. As he saved people, we also must learn to obey him. In his Founders Day message P. Moses Yoon shared Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-19. Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. This Jesus commands us to go and make disciples of all nations. We must obey this command and teach others

to obey it. In fact we must obey everything Jesus has commanded us. Our culture emphasizes human rights and personal freedom. But these cultural values must not limit our obedience to Jesus. Our supreme loyalty must be to Jesus. We must learn and teach obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. This is essential in fulfilling our prayer topic to raise 120 disciples of Jesus among college students in the Chicago area.

Thus far, we have thought mostly about Jesus' cry from the cross. Before Jesus died, one more event is mentioned (35-36). When some standing nearby heard Jesus' cry, they misunderstood him, thinking he was calling Elijah. They offered him wine vinegar to revive him and said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down." According to Jewish folklore, Elijah would come in the time of distress to deliver righteous sufferers. Some observers wanted to see such a miracle. But this would contradict the will of God. In our time, some people misunderstand God's words. In seeking an easier and more comfortable life on earth, they focus on Bible verses that promise prosperity and success, rather than on knowing God. It is vital to know God as he truly is. He is the God of suffering, holy love--the God of the cross. Mark says clearly that Jesus died. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last (37). He did not pretend to die; he actually died.

Second, the impact of Jesus' death (38-47). In verses 38-47 Mark tells us what happened after Jesus died: a curtain was torn, a Roman centurion made a surprising confession, some faithful women witnessed Jesus' death and burial, and Joseph of Arimathea displayed bold courage. First of all, we see what God has done through Jesus' death. As soon as Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (38). This curtain was four inches thick and thirty feet high. It represented the huge barrier between holy God and sinners. No one could tear this curtain, even if they dared. It was God who tore this curtain from top to bottom, signaling the end of the OT sacrificial system. In fact, this system did not remove the barrier between God and his people. It was only a foreshadow that pointed to Jesus. Jesus fulfilled God's salvation work on the cross once for all. Jesus himself became the new and living way opened to God (Heb 10:20). We no longer need a human high priest or a temple building or to sacrifice animals. Jesus is enough because he is the perfect sacrifice, the everlasting high priest, and the temple. Through Jesus'

death, we can come to God any time and in any place; we have access to God as his precious children; we receive eternal life and living hope in his kingdom. This is God's amazing grace.

Secondly, a Roman centurion made a surprising confession. Before the cross of Jesus was a Roman centurion. He oversaw Jesus' crucifixion. He must have been hardened and cruel, carrying out many crucifixions. He saw that most criminals died in shame, dishonor and fear, uttering curses or words of bitterness. But Jesus was quite different. He had never seen anyone die like Jesus did. He felt the presence of the divine. He saw the one true God in Jesus. His hardened heart melted, and he declared, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (39) His confession reveals that Jesus' death was not an ordinary man's death, but the death of the Son of God. Through this centurion's change, we can have hope that all people can be saved.

Thirdly, some faithful women witness Jesus' death. When Jesus was arrested, all of his disciples ran away. No one was with Jesus. He was left alone and even forsaken by God for a moment. But some women followed Jesus to the place where he was crucified. Mark mentions their names: "Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome" (40). These women had been with Jesus since he was in Galilee, caring for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there (41). It was dangerous. But they were not daunted. They were faithful at the risk of their lives. In this way they became witnesses of Jesus' death and burial, and of his resurrection (47). Because they were there, we have this wonderful factual account of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. How beautiful these women are!

Finally, Joseph of Arimathea became a bold follower of Jesus. Jesus died on a Friday evening, on preparation day for the Sabbath (42). Under Roman law, the release of a crucified man's body for burial required the permission of the imperial magistrate. Usually, when a victim's family made such a request, it was granted. If not, the body may be left on a cross to decay, or be eaten by predatory animals or birds, and the remains thrown into a common grave. Until this time, Joseph of Arimathea had been a secret disciple of Jesus (Jn 19:38). He was a prominent member of the Council who was also waiting

for the kingdom of God (43). He must have been tired of the hypocrisy, callousness and viciousness of the ruling elite. Jesus' beautiful life and teaching captured his heart and he tried to follow Jesus. But he was afraid of the Jewish leaders. However, when he saw Jesus' death on the cross, his fear vanished; he went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. He publicly honored Jesus and identified with Jesus. Jesus' death changed him from a secret disciple into a courageous witness of Jesus.

Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead (44). After he had confirmed this through the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph (45). 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 (46). Isaiah had prophesied about Jesus' burial: "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death..." (Isa 53:9a). And now, through Joseph of Arimathea God's word was fulfilled. Jesus died and was buried according to the Scriptures. But this was not the end. It is the prelude of his glorious resurrection.

Let's accept the truth about God; he is the God of long-suffering, holy love for sinners. To bring this love to us, Jesus cried from the cross. Let's not doubt God's love in any situation but have assurance of God's love. Then we can experience God's victory amidst the real struggles of our daily lives. Let's learn Jesus' obedience in making disciples. And let's not be secret disciples, but boldly testify about Jesus' death and resurrection. May God richly bless you through the cross of Jesus.