**My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?**

April 5, 2020

Mark 15:16-47

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?’).”

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This is the cry of someone who feels that God is not there. He cries out that God abandoned him. Have you felt that way? Someone might have said, “Where was God when my mother died of cancer?” “Where was God when my child was killed by a car?” Jesus also cried out that God was not there for him. But God was there. God was there not to punish those who were mocking Jesus. He was there not to protect his Son. He was there to punish his Son for our sins. Isaiah 53:10a says, “Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin.” Our sin separated Jesus from God. That is why he felt that God was not there. So next time when you feel that God is not with you, remember that God is with you. God is with you in your pain and suffering. It is your sin that makes you feel that you are separated from God. Today let’s think about Jesus’ crucifixion for our sins.

The Bible does not focus on the physical aspects of Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion. It does not focus on the details of his scourging, it gives us no description whatsoever. Nor does it focus on his crucifixion. It says simply, “They crucified him,” and it says nothing more than that. There are no adjectives. There are no descriptive phrases, and there is no discussion as to what crucifixion was. But what is carefully described here is the blasphemous mockery that was launched at the mock trial in the courtyard of the high priest, and here by the soldiers. Look at verses 16-20. Since Jesus was tried and condemned with the charge, “THE KING OF THE JEWS,” they decorated Jesus like a king of the Jews. They put a purple robe on him. Next they twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on Jesus’ head. As soon as the crown of thorns was set on his head, the blood smeared out by the thorns on Jesus’ head and face. Instead of feeling sorry for him, the soldiers began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck him on his head with a staff and spit on him. Then they fell on their knees and worshipped him, to mock Jesus. He is viewed by the people as a joke, claiming to be the king, God’s king, God’s Son, the Chosen One. It is all a joke as far as they are concerned. They think it is ridiculous. They treat him with such dishonor, they treat him with such shame and such hatred, that it is shocking.

Jesus had been beaten up all night and he was too weak to carry the rugged cross. The Roman soldiers grabbed a certain man, known as Simon, and forced him to carry the cross. They say that Simon was from Cyrene in Africa. He was passing by, on his way in from the country. No doubt his lifetime ambition was to eat one Passover in Jerusalem, as other pilgrims did. He must have saved up for half a lifetime in order to come. Then this happened to him. At the moment Simon must have bitterly resented it. He must have hated the Romans, and hated this criminal whose cross he was forced to carry. It was a bad luck. However, something happened in his heart. He was moved by the divine grace of Jesus, even when he was seen as a condemned criminal by the world. It was the moment of divine grace and conversion for him. He could see God in the tortured Jesus. After that, Simon became a very influential Christian who raised many gospel workers.

Look at verse 22. “They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).” Golgotha, in Aramaic, means “skull.” Calvary is the Latin for “skull.” The routine of crucifixion was to take the longest way to the place of execution so that many might see and take warning. Following this routine, Jesus was completely drained. Nobody could look at this tortured and drained Jesus, covered with blood, so they offered Jesus drugged wine to ease the terrible pain. Look at verse 23. “Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.” Jesus resolved to taste pain and bitterness to the fullest. Jesus refused to take drugged wine in that desperate situation. He did this so that he might obey the will of God thoroughly. How beautiful Jesus was in obeying God’s will! Jesus refused to drink the drugged wine so that he could carry all our sorrows and pains as our High Priest thoroughly. He cared about our sorrows and pains so much that he did not care about his own pains and bleeding. On the contrary, how weak human beings are! Many are burdened by their small and selfish problems and do their best to get out of pain and suffering which comes from the problem. Don’t we have to learn how to overcome pain and sorrow by caring for others like Jesus?

As soon as they arrived at the place of execution, the soldiers placed the cross flat on the ground and they stretched Jesus upon it. They nailed his hands and his feet with hammers. They projected a ledge of wood between his legs, then they raised the cross upright and set it in its socket. It was death by suffocation because eventually without any kind of relief, without any water, without any kind of protection, with bugs flying into one’s eyes and one’s ears and one’s mouth. Unable to finally pull oneself up or push oneself up, the weight of the body drove the lungs to empty, and one couldn’t breathe and finally died a horrible death. A thousand years before Jesus was crucified, David described his crucifixion when there was no such thing as a crucifixion. “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint…My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth…All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me.” (Ps 22:14-17) Look at verse 27. “They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left.” The chief priests and the teachers of the law crucified two rebels with him in order to humiliate Jesus by making him equal with two rebels. Why did Jesus have to be crucified in this way? It is because of our sin. Sin is small. But it accumulates like a mountain. Because of our sins we must be tortured and nailed to a cross. We have to be lifted up after crucifixion to reveal all our sins to the world. But our precious Jesus took our place and bore all our transgressions and iniquities.

When he was in the anguish of death on the cross, the crowd of people who passed by insulted him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!” They mocked Jesus’ power, that the one who said that he would build the temple in three days, when other builders took forty-six years, did not even have the power to come down from the cross to save himself. 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!” There is a stunning truth in what they said out of ignorance. Jesus did not save himself in order to save others. The chief priests and rulers of Israel, in order to save their authority and prestige, made every possible attempt to destroy Jesus. Pilate, the Roman governor, in order to save his position, put Jesus to death even though he knew that Jesus was innocent. Peter denied Jesus three times in order to save himself. How much do human beings struggle to save themselves! Who does not save himself when he has enough power to save himself? But Jesus did not save himself in order to save others. When we are busy, our Bible study becomes burdensome and we want to do our homework first and then study the Bible. But those who save themselves first and then try to save others are living against God’s truth. They can never save even one lost soul.

At this point, one can ask, “Why isn’t God punishing these blasphemers?” Shouldn’t fire fall from heaven and burn them up? Shouldn’t the ground open and swallow them whole into hell? You would expect our God, true and holy, to do that to these merciless, wicked, sarcastic blasphemers of his beloved Son. What is God doing? It appears as if he is doing nothing. In the Old Testament, the penalty for blasphemy was death. Why doesn’t God come down and kill these sinners? Because God made Jesus a sin offering. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross.” Paul says, “He took the curse for us.” (Gal 3:13) God punishes his Son so that the blasphemers can be forgiven. How powerful is the cross? So powerful that those who were there at the time, blaspheming Jesus in his face, were redeemed. Acts 6:7 says many of the priests later came to faith in Christ. They were forgiven. That is the power of the cross.

The death of Jesus on the cross was the most unjust error done by men. Pain and injustice darkened the world. Look at verse 33. “At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.” Even nature could not endure to look at the anguish and injustice. So she closed her eyes and darkness came over the whole land. This is the high point of salvation history. This is the long-awaited Lamb of God dying for the sins of the world. For three hours, God poured his wrath on his Son because of our sins. This is the cup that Jesus anticipated in the Garden, the cup of wrath. This is why it was such a terrifying anticipation that made him sweat drops of blood because in those three hours Jesus suffered the eternal hell of all the people through human history who would be saved. He bore all their eternal punishments together and did it in three hours. It is in those three hours that he bore in his body our sins. It is in those three hours that he was made sin for us. It is in those three hours that he took the curse. Jesus did not die as a martyr to a righteous cause or simply as an innocent man wrongly accused and condemned. Nor, as some suggest, did he die as a heroic gesture against man’s inhumanity to man. Those are admirable death. But because Jesus died as a substitute sacrifice for the sins of the world, the righteous heavenly Father had to judge him fully according to that sin.

Look at verse 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?’)” When Jesus said, “My God, my God,” this is the only time in the New Testament that he ever referred to God in any other way than “Father.” Every other time he spoke to God, he called him “Father.” But Jesus feels that God is not there. Up to now, he had suffered everything that life could bring him. He had endured the failures of his disciples. He had endured the most searing pains that life could offer when his hands were nailed to the cross. When the crown of thorns was set on his head, he said nothing. He saw his mother Mary weeping near the cross. On the cross, Jesus had many things to say and he had many things for which to cry. At this moment, he said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He was always sure about the love-relationship between himself and God. God had declared, “This is my beloved Son.” But because of the sin of the world, God poured out his wrath on him. It was not because Jesus had sinned. It was because he was sinless. God put all our sins on him so that he might die as a ransom sacrifice and we might come to God. As John the Baptist said, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” On the cross, because of our sins God closed his ears and hid his face from Jesus. To Jesus the most painful thing was not the physical pain, but the broken love-relationship with God. But even in this moment, God was really in charge of all of this because it is in the plan of God that Jesus would die at three in the afternoon at the very moment when they were slaughtering all the Passover lambs, and he would be the one true Lamb of God.

Look at verse 38. “The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” In the past, people depended on animal sacrifices in the temple for the atonement of their sins. The ark of God and the atonement cover were in the Most Holy Place, behind the curtain. Only high priests could go in to the Most Holy Place once a year with animal blood for the forgiveness of sins. Now animal sacrifices for the atonement of our sins became obsolete because Jesus died for us once and for all. All we have to do is to go to Jesus just as we are, believing that he died for our sins. Then we are set free from the depression of sin; changes in our hearts begin to happen and changes in our lives as well. The New Covenant of salvation at the moment Jesus died was ratified. He had paid in full the punishment, the penalty, justly for all who would ever believe. Officially, at three in the afternoon on that Friday in April in the year A.D. 30, the Old Covenant was abolished. All sacrifices became pointless because the only true and saving sacrifice had been offered. The way into the presence of God is wide open for anyone through Jesus.

In verses 42-47, Mark deals with the burial of Jesus. His intention in writing this is obvious. Mark wants to confirm the fact that Jesus actually died and set the scene for the glorious resurrection. Look at verse 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.” Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin and a secret disciple of Jesus. He was so fearful that he couldn’t identify himself as a disciple of Jesus. But the cross of Jesus gave him power and he boldly came forward and asked for the body of Jesus. When Pilate granted him permission to do so, he took down the body and wrapped it in linen and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Maybe Joseph had prepared this stone tomb for himself. But he gave his tomb to Jesus and became a part of Bible history. He rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Jesus died and was buried. But it was not the end. It was only the prelude for the glorious resurrection.

Jesus was forsaken because of our sins, so that we may be forgiven. He was condemned so that we may be accepted, spending forever with him, loving him, serving him, praising him, reflecting his glory throughout all eternity. If you are still unsure about Jesus’ forgiveness of your sins, would you accept him today as the Son of God who died for your sin?

Big Idea: Jesus was forsaken so that we may be forgiven