

FORSAKEN!

Reading Matthew 27:27-46

INTRO: Our text this Good Friday morning is, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani." It means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It comes from Matthew 27:46. I am redoing a message that I did in 1998. I called it, "Forsaken!" Today is the day we commemorate the death of Christ. It is a most significant day. On Palm Sunday I mentioned that He died when the Passover lambs died. The Passover lambs were the shadow, but here was Christ, the One that was represented by that shadow.

Matthew 27:45, the verse before our text says that from the sixth hour to the ninth hour darkness reigned. In Luke 22:53 Jesus said, "...this is your hour and the power of darkness." Never had the powers of darkness reigned more supremely. Christ came to His own, but His own did not receive Him. No, they rejected Him. But not only that, they condemned Him to die the most cruel death ever invented. And when the darkness fell thick upon the land it symbolized God turning His back on His only Son, a suffering Son. There has not been a darker hour in human history than this one. It was an hour that belonged to man and the devil.

Some time ago we discussed Christ's birth in Sunday School class and the fact that He was born in a stable. And someone asked in the class what would have happened if He had been born in a palace. I had never thought about that. But I answered like this, "I am not sure what would have happened. But if He had preached and taught as He did, He would have been crucified all the same." There are some things Satan and this world cannot put up with.

The text we have this morning takes place shortly after 3 pm. Man's hour, the hour of darkness had come. Let me tell you what had taken place from the evening before until now. The evening before, after they had picked up the Passover lamb from the temples priests the disciples had prepared the Passover meal. It would have taken one lamb for their number of people. And I suppose somewhere between 7 and 10 they would have had their meal. Remember that Jesus had washed their feet and then they had their meal.

From in Jerusalem, at the upper room, after the meal, they made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Here Jesus prayed for three hours while the disciples couldn't keep their eyes open. And just as He had said to His Father, "Not My will be done but Thine", Judas came with a band of Roman

soldiers and they tied Jesus up and led Him back to Jerusalem. It is between 4:00 - 5:30 in the morning. He was then first taken to Annas, who had once been the High Priest but the Romans had replaced him with Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law. This is a long and hard hearing, but since they did not have authority to kill Jesus, they sent Him to Pilate, the Roman authority that had the right to sentence Jesus to death. It is now the time that roosters crow. You will remember Peter here. He has had a long night.

Pilate found the case too much for Him and sent Him to Herod. It is maybe 6:00-6:30 now. Well, Herod was only interested in seeing some miracle performed, and when that did not happen, he sent Jesus back to Pilate. I expect it is about 7:00 or 7:30. Pilate now gives the people a choice between releasing Jesus, a Man who never sinned, and Barabbas, a wicked sinner. But because this Lamb of God was blemished in the sight of the people, they called to have Barabbas released. Jesus is then scourged. This is a very horrible whipping.

Jesus is then taken to the Praetorian where He is mocked and mistreated and crowned with a crown of thorns and then He is made to carry the upper piece of the cross to Golgotha. They arrive there about 8:30 or so. It is then that He is crucified and at about 9:00 a.m. or so, the cross is raised and He is hanging. Now His real physical agony, the agony of the cross began. At about noon, all of a sudden darkness fell over the whole land. It was a divine darkness and it lasted for 3 hours. And it is after these hours of darkness that Jesus cried out the words of our text this morning.

You see, Jesus had drunk that awful cup in the Garden of Gethsemane and He was doomed to die. They had captured Him. They had tied the Creator up like a criminal, they had mocked Him and spit on Him and flogged Him and laid the patibulum of the cross on Him and finally crucified Him. And now He was on the cross. It was now but a matter of time before He would die. And by now He had hung on the cross for 6 agonizing hours, and about the ninth hour, 3 p.m. Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This morning we are going to look at this question in some detail.

I. MY GOD, MY GOD

We begin with the word, "My God, My God..." I must ask a question here. How could God be His God if He was God? Do you get the question? Well, let me tell you something. God the Father is God. He will never be

anything but God. He is God. You and I are human. That means we are part of humanity, or man. We will never be anything else but man. But there is a teaching regarding the Lord Jesus Christ that is most incredible. It is the fact that He is both human and divine. He is both man and God. This is a theological truth which the Bible clearly teaches and which the cults seek to escape. It is this, that Jesus is both human and divine. He is both God and man. Sometimes in Scripture we see Him in His divinity. In Matthew 24-25 we find Him telling us all about what the future holds. There is the divine Son of God. Then we find Him hungry or tired, and there we have a man. We find Him learning obedience. There He is a man. Then we find Him knowing what is in all men, and there we find Him divine.

Well, here, in this heartrending cry to His Father, we find Him in His full humanity. How is it that Jesus would call God His God when He Himself is God? It is this, He is speaking out of His humanity. In His humanity God Almighty was His Father. You see, Jesus was fully God but He was also fully man.

When our oldest daughter was just a baby she was hospitalized in the city of Prince George, some sixty miles from where we lived. When I thought of this passage a memory of her hospitalization at a young age came forcefully to mind. We, of course, went to see her while she was in the hospital. It was a pleasure to walk into her room. She would look in our direction and then when she recognized who we were, you could see that recognition take place and then a big smile and she would crawl as far toward us as the crib would allow. So we would spend time with her there in the hospital room. But then came parting time. Oh this was a hard moment. We could not explain to her little mind that we would be back. And so when our visiting time was over we would have to make our way out of the room. When she realized we were leaving she would begin to cry the saddest cry. After we had gone out I peeked in the window where she couldn't see me and over the tall crib I could see those little arms flailing, begging, pleading, and those little hands opening and closing and groping about, but with all the groping and grasping, her parents were gone. To her little mind mom and dad had forsaken her.

When I pondered on Jesus' words in this text the picture of my daughter's face came to mind. Plainer

words could not be written on a face than these, "My dad, My dad, why are you forsaking me?" Now my daughter would not have felt as forsaken if it were a dad or a mom that forsook her. There were many moms and dads that went by and it did not bother her. But it was *her* own mom and *her* own dad that had forsaken her. All the reason that little brain could muster could not answer why her very own parents would forsake her. And when Jesus cried out on the cross, it was because His Father had forsaken Him.

But let me tell you that though a father may forsake his very own child, surely God never would forsake His very own Son, would he? But alas, the most horrible hour of the world has come when even God turned His back on His own Son. Three agonizing hours of hope ticked by and when it became evident that God would not turn His face again and death was certain, Jesus utters this heartrending cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me."

II. WHY

Look now at the question word in this cry, "Why?" When our reasoning abilities go to work on a problem and they come away empty or without an adequate answer we say, "Why?" Some tragedy. Some death. Some terrible event. When our mind gropes and comes up empty and we cry out, "Why?" I suppose we have all come to those times of life when all reason seems to fail and we say, "Why?"

Jesus, beaten, bruised, bleeding, mocked and crucified hangs there between heaven and earth, between God and man. From a human perspective, there are no good answers, and then comes this heartrending cry from His parched lips, "Why?" Forsaken by God and forsaken by man, what an unthinkable predicament.

So, we too ask, why did God forsake Him? God had not forsaken Him because He did not care for His Son. We did not leave our daughter because we did not love her. You see, in the Garden of Gethsemane God's Son had plead with Him for three hours that He might be spared the reason for this forsaking. There in the Garden God offered Him a cup. This cup contained man's sin, mine and yours; all of them. But the end of those three hours of agonizing ended with this resolve in the heart of Jesus, "Not my will but thine be done." And in those dark hours of the night, He took that

bitter cup and He drank it.

I want to ask you this morning what you think of our God. Does He have feelings, emotions, compassion and anger? Or is He like a machine? Do you think that God knows what it is like to feel what my wife and I felt like when we left the hospital with our daughter's hands flailing over the tall crib? Do you think He bends Himself to communicate to man about love but He Himself does not have the capacity to truly love? I want to tell you that I believe with all my heart that He knows and feels these very things we feel.

A number of years ago I gave a message on God's love for man at Eagle's Nest Bible Camp, illustrating it with the story of the man who had to crush his only son in order to save a trainload of passengers from plunging into the mighty Mississippi River. There was a young lady there whom I have met several times later and each time I met her she stopped me to remind me of that message and to express her gratefulness for the understanding she gained of what it must have been like for God the Father to give His Son. She had never thought of Christ's death from the perspective of a father.

But I will tell you now why God forsook His Son. It was because He loves you. And He loves me. If you can imagine this morning how much you would have to love someone to give your son on their behalf, then you have an idea how much God loves you. You see, God forsook His Son because in the Garden of Gethsemane He took the cup of our sins, when He said, "Not my will but thine be done." God dealt with sin in His Son, but it was our sin. That is why.

"My God, My God, why..." Because, my Son, you are loaded with sin. No man on earth has been as loaded with sin as You are. I cannot look at You. I must turn My back. But remember, My Son, My only Son, You said, "Not my will but thine be done."

I suppose we have all heard of a parent who has said these words when having to discipline their child, "This hurts me more than you." I don't suppose anyone has any idea how much pain God Almighty endured when He had to turn His back on His only Son. What must it have been like when God heard these pleading words, "My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?" He too saw those flailing arms and those hands groping for Him,

but He was gone. He had forsaken His only Son.

III. HAVE YOU

So, let us come to our question once more: "My God, My God, why HAVE YOU forsaken me." I wonder if you have ever built up confidence in a certain person and then that person let you down. And you thought, "Why, of all people, did you do this?" You would expect something like this from other people but not that person. You are let down by a person from whom you did not expect it. I suppose most of us have done that to someone else at one time or another and we've all experienced it from someone else.

Jesus was not questioning why the leader, Herod had let Him down. He was not questioning why the High Priest had let Him down. He was not questioning why those who had sung Hosanna to Him just days before had let Him down. He was not even questioning why His own disciples had let Him down. No, He did not ask why they had let Him down. He turned His face to God the Father; His God, His Father, and said, "Why have YOU forsaken me?"

When we left our daughter in the hospital she did not care when other parents went out and left. But when we left, that caused pain she could only express by crying and groping and reaching out. We were not just any parents. We were her parents. Jesus was not just anybodies Son. He was God's Son. And so He said, "My God, My God, why HAVE YOU forsaken Me?"

IV. FORSAKEN

So let us take a look at this word, 'forsaken'. The Greek word for *forsaken* here is *engkataleipo*. It means to leave someone when they're in trouble. It means to leave someone when they're helpless. I once heard a missionary to the Philippines speak at Prairie when I was in Bible school. He had been a professional hockey player, playing with the Vancouver Canucks. He went mountain climbing and fell several hundred feet. He came very close to dying and while he was down and trying to recover, just barely holding on to life; and when it became obvious that he would no longer be a hockey player and someone to admire; and while he was hanging between life and death, his wife left him. That, is what it means to be forsaken.

My uncle George was married and had two children when he got MS. Then when he had deteriorated to where he could not walk any more, one day he woke up to a house with bare walls. His wife had moved out.

Consider Jesus. For over 30 years He walked with God. He never did wrong. He always did those things that pleased His Father. And then his own people laid hands on Him to put Him to death. He was beaten. He was mocked. He was scourged. And then He was nailed to the cross. And when life could not possibly get any worse, then His own Father turned His back on Him. He left Him when He was down. He deserted Him when He was helpless.

But I can tell you why God forsook Him. He had taken the cup offered to Him, and these were the consequences. God had in view the good of the whole sum of lost mankind, when He forsook His Son. It was you and I He had in view when He forsook His only Son. What a horrendous price to pay!

But I want to tell you something. God had forsaken His only Son, but it was not to be forever. Go with Me to Acts 2. Look at verse 25-28 (read). This passage is an Old Testament prophecy of the death of Christ. And the prophecy is of Jesus saying, "You will not leave my soul in Hades..." The KJV says 'hell' where the NKJV has 'hades'. This is not speaking of hell. That is Gehenna. The original word here is 'hades'. Hades in my understanding is the state a person enters at death where the body has been separated from the soul. And Jesus is saying, "You will not leave my soul separated from the body." Then it says, "Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." The maggots would not be allowed to corrupt His body. He was in the grave three days and three nights, and then He was raised from the dead. His soul was restored to His renewed, resurrected body before the worms ever took over.

Now I want you to notice why I went to this passage. Look at the word, 'leave' in the clause, 'You will not leave my soul in hades.' This word 'leave' is the same word translated 'forsaken' in our text. Jesus said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The word translated 'forsaken' here is translated in some other places, 'left'. But in this prophetic passage it says, "You will not leave (or we could say, forsake) My soul in hades." You will not leave My soul in the separated

state. Before My body sees corruption, My soul will be reunited to My new body.

Let me give you something hopeful here. There had never been another person whose body had not seen corruption before his soul was reunited to the new body. As a matter of fact, no one had ever experienced the new body until Jesus was resurrected. But He experienced His new body even before the old body decayed. And here is the good news. Those who are living Christians when Christ comes will experience a new body in far less time than Jesus did. His body was separated from soul and spirit for three days and three nights. I want you to go to 1 Corinthians 15 (read 51-54). You see, at the rapture people will be changed from this present body to the resurrected body instantaneously. It will not even take three days.

V. ME

Well, we come to our last word, the pronoun 'Me', referring to Jesus Himself. "My God My God, why have You forsaken Me." What is most shocking is that God would forsake Him, of all people. Surely there would be reason to forsake Herod, or Pilate, or the Pharisees or the people, or even the disciples. But how could God forsake Him? Think this morning of Who it was that was hanging on the cross. It was the One to whom God said way back at creation, "Let there be light." It was the One who, when God said, "Let there be light" He created the light so that God could say, "And there was light." In six days He created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. It was the One who had been promised throughout the OT. It was the One who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, the One who lived among mankind and never once sinned in all His life. It was God, Creator, King and Lord. And now some of the last breaths of air will be used to cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

I can understand God forsaking those fickle people who cried "Hosanna" one day and "Crucify Him" the next. I can understand God forsaking those self righteous Scribes and Pharisees. I can see God forsaking even that unfaithful High Priest. I can see God forsaking you and me. But I cannot see God forsaking His only Son, His sinless Son, can you?

My God, My God, why have You forsaken ME? Good

question isn't it? Why did God forsake the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords? But we know the answer. We can say, "I can tell you, My Lord and My King, why Your God forsook You. Let me tell You Lord in the words of the poet who wrote why Your God forsook You:"

I see the crowd in Pilate's hall,
I mark their wrathful mien; (behaviour)
Their shouts of "Crucify" apall,
With blasphemy between.

And of the shouting multitude,
I feel that I am one;
And in that din of voices rude,
I recognize my own.

Twas I that shed that sacred blood,
I nailed Him to the tree;
I crucified the Christ of God,
I joined the mockery.

Around the cross, the throng I see
mocking the sufferer's groan;
Yet still my voice it seems to be,
As if I mocked alone.

Horatius Bonar.

You see Lord, God loved me and the whole family of sinful mankind so much that He forsook You. He did it for us!"

CONCL: So let us conclude. Jesus Christ was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Before creation took place God had a plan. That is very clear from Scripture. And when God created man, He knew that in the end He would get something that would be worth its while even though it would cost Him the price above every price.

And so God created man. And as soon as man had been created God's arch enemy, Satan began his work. He caused Adam to sin and with Adam's sin came man's fallen sin nature and a sin cursed creation. And then, when many years had passed, in the fullness of time God sent forth His only Son into the world. And He lived a perfectly righteous life and proclaimed the words of God and man, along with the devil, sought to destroy Him. And when the time drew near that God's only Son was to be offered up, it became obvious that that time had come as well. And then came Gethsemene. And in Gethsemene Christ was crushed. He was pulverized. And in the

end He said, "Not My will be done, but thine." And He drank that cup and when He had drunk that cup, He was condemned to die.

The brutality of the next hours cannot be adequately written. But when He had been scourged and condemned to die He was taken to Golgotha. And there He was nailed to the cross and left hang to let nature take its course the way it does to those who have been crucified. And about the ninth hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, the time when the sacrificial lambs begin to die, He called for a drink. And when He had received a drink He said, "It is finished." And then He cried out with a loud voice and said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." And He died.

My God, My God why have You forsaken Me? And what is God's answer? "I forsook You my Son, because You bore the sin of the world. I forsook You so I might save sinners. I forsook You, My Son, but though in this dark hour You cannot see it, for all eternity You will be glad of it." And so Paul says, "Oh, the depth of the wisdom of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"