

## Good Friday – Mount Olive

### Text: Matthew 27:45-49 (NIV)

<sup>45</sup>From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. <sup>46</sup>About 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?” <sup>47</sup>When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.” <sup>48</sup>Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. <sup>49</sup>The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

### Theme: He Was Forsaken, so that We Will Never Be

The worst feeling in the world is to be forsaken by someone, especially someone who is close to you. You think that there is one person that you can always count on. If you were to go to that person and they would turn their back on you, it would be devastating.

What would it be like to be forsaken by God? Imagine praying to him and receiving no answer. Imagine if God responded that you mean nothing to Him. We will never know that feeling. Christ was forsaken on the cross for a time, so that we will never be.

I. Many people have felt as though they were forsaken by God.

Jesus quoted Psalm 22 on the cross. It is a Messianic psalm, that prophesies Good Friday. It is also a particle kind of psalm called a psalm of complaint. Psalm 13 is an example of such a psalm. David begins that Psalm, “*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will hide your face from me?*” The prophet Jeremiah made many of these complaints against God. In Jeremiah 20 He cries out, “*O Lord you deceived me and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long. Everyone mocks me...The word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long.*”

As Christians we have all had times when we wondered where God was. Why isn’t He answering my prayers? Where is His help? Why do I have one problem after the next? Why do all of these temptations keep calling? Why do I suffer so much ridicule because of my faith? Like King David, Jeremiah, and Job we often want to cry out, “Where are you Lord?”

II. No one ever suffered that anguish as much as Jesus did on the cross.

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed that this cup would be taken from Him. Luke writes that He prayed so fervently that His sweat became like drops of blood. Jesus dreaded going to the cross. While he was on the cross He prayed Psalm 22, which begins “*My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?*” When you read that psalm, it is amazing how well it describes the Lord’s passion right down to the smallest detail. In verses 6-8 Christ is looking around Him. All that He sees are people who are mocking and insulting Him. The chief priests, the scribes, those who passed by, and even the criminals who were crucified with Him, shook their heads and scoffed at Him. Matthew writes that they were all saying the exact words of this psalm, “*He trusts in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He takes pleasure in Him.*” (27:42)

Christ was innocent of any crime. Yet He hung on the cross in great pain. There was no compassion. As far as He could see, people were mocking Him and taunting Him to come down. The ironic thing is that in verses 3-5 of Psalm 22, Christ remembers how God never forgot His people in the past. They trusted in Him and were delivered. But as Jesus looked around Him on the cross, God and His help seemed very far away.

In verses 12-18 of the psalm Christ looks at Himself and sees what a miserable wretch He has become. His persecutors are strong, and any strength He had is fading away. His is thirsty. His heart is getting weaker. He is close to death. Verse 16 says that His hands and feet have been pierced. They have been stretched out and nailed to a cross. He looks at His body, and He can see His bones. The picture is of someone who has been stripped of His garments. They are casting lots for those garments right underneath Him. To look at Christ on the cross would be to see one of the ugliest sights imaginable. To be honest, it's so horrible that we would rather not even think about it. Again there is irony. Verses 9-10 of the psalm show that ever since His incarnation God has been with Jesus. He has always been near with His help. But now in His greatest need, the Father has forsaken His Son. He has left Him to suffer at the hands of evil men. No one would ever suffer like Jesus did on that cross. The harshest words of all are in verse 15 where Jesus says, *"You lay me in the dust of death."* The point is that God caused Him to suffer this much. The Father punished Jesus until He killed Him. If you want to see what hell is like, you don't have to look any farther than the cross of Jesus Christ. He suffered hell in our place.

I looked at the word "forsake" throughout the Bible. There are many references in the Old Testament of times when Israel forsook the Lord and followed other gods. But God promised His people, *"I will never leave you or forsake you."* (Dt. 31:6) Jesus' case was different from any other in the world. This time it was not man who had forsaken God, but God who forsook His own Son. Jesus cried out to His Father, but for the longest time there was no reply.

III. Here is the amazing thing. Even though the Father had turned from Him, Jesus still cried to Him. He still held to His Father as His God. He would not let go.

At the pinnacle of His suffering He cried out, *"My God! My God, why have you forsaken Me?!"* He continued to trust and to be obedient to His Father. In Psalm 22 the Savior cries out, *"But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength come quickly to help me."* Christ would not let go of His Father. At the end, His Father listened again. He did not despise the suffering of the Afflicted One. He received Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. He received Jesus' spirit when He died, and raised Him from the dead on the third day. Christ did not suffer in vain. His suffering brought peace with God to each one of us. Psalm 22, which describes Jesus' complaint and suffering ends, *"They will proclaim His righteousness to a people yet unborn—for He has done it."*

II. Because Christ suffered in our place, we will never know what it is like to be forsaken by God..

These psalms of complaint always begin with a harsh complaint against God. However, that complaint always turns into trust and then praise. For instance, in Psalm 13 David prayed, *"But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD for He has been good to me."* In his complaint Jeremiah went on to pray, *"But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior.. Sing to the LORD Give praise to the LORD! He rescues the life of the needy from*

*the hands of the wicked.” (Jer 20:11-13)*

The Bible often compares hell to a place where the fire never goes out. (Mk 9:43) It is where God has turned His back, and there is not a trace of His goodness and love. Because Jesus suffered hell in our place, we will never know what that is like. When we cry out to God, He never turns His back. He hears our prayers and send His angels to help and strengthen us. He is with us every step of the way. Even our sins don't turn Him away. Jesus intercedes for us at His Father's right hand. Even in death we are not forsaken. Jesus promises to bring us to His kingdom and even raise our bodies on the last day. With the people in those psalms we can rely on God's forgiveness, strength, and peace in any situation in life. We know that He will never leave us or forsake us, and that nothing can ever separate us from His great love. God promises to be with us both now and forevermore because Jesus has paid for our sins in full. When we think of God's faithfulness to us in Christ, our lament also turns into trust, and finally into praise. It also says in Psalm 22, "*You who fear the LORD, praise Him: All you descendant of Jacob, honor honor Him. Revere Him, all You descendants of Israel! For He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the Afflicted One.*" We praise God that He received Jesus sacrifice for us on the cross, and that through Christ we can be confident of God's love throughout our lives.

Jesus was forsaken that day on the cross, so that we will never know what it is like to be forsaken by God. Thanks be to Him, that He suffered the full brunt of God's wrath, that we can receive the favor and grace of God as our loving Father.

Amen.

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