

TFTD 23.39 Good Friday

Matthew 27.31-50: My God my God, why have you forsaken me!!?



**Jesus said these final words with a loud cry.
And then he cried out loudly again.
And his spirit left him.**

Why did he cry so loudly? After hours nailed to a cross one might imagine a hoarse whisper would be all he was capable of.

This is the cry of the Son of God, forsaken by the Father, echoing in the eerie noonday darkness. The Father has abandoned the Son. God has betrayed God. There is no darkness darker than this. Even

the sun cannot shine.

This is also the cry of humanity, separated from God, screaming out to God, ‘why have you abandoned us!!?’ It is the cry from every prison cell, every detention centre, every concentration camp, every torture chamber. It is the cry of those whose children have died and of those who are in constant pain and have no relief. It is the cry of those who yearn for justice and yearn for peace.

Be in no doubt, there is no darkness darker than this. The Son of God enters into this darkness. He joins us in humanity’s darkness. He screams with us. He screams for us. ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken us!!?’

But even in the words of his cry there is a sign of the hope that is to come. ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me’ is the first line of Psalm 22.

And the Psalm continues:

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

**O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.**

But then it reads;

**Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.
In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you
delivered them.**

**To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.**

**And the psalm continues to oscillate between
expressions of despair and hope, forsakenness and
redemption, weaving in images that remind us of
the crucifixion, even though the words were written
hundreds of years before it happened.**

And this is how the psalm ends:

**To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow
down;**

**before him shall bow all who go down to the
dust,**

and I shall live for him.

Posterity will serve him;

**future generations will be told about the Lord,
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet
unborn,**

saying that he has done it.

That final line echoes the last words Jesus spoke from the cross according to John's Gospel, 'It is finished.'

Because God does not enter into our darkness just to share in our suffering, but to free us from it. The moment of Christ's death is also the moment of victory over death. Those held captive by death are set free at that very moment and people yet unborn are liberated.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. At this point the disciples did not have even an inkling of the victory that had been won. Jesus was forsaken by man as well as by God. For the next day and a bit, we too must remain in the darkness.

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Pilgrims wait to touch the rock of Golgotha, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.