



**Sermon Notes: Cameron Webber,
Good Friday - “My God, my God...”
Readings: Matthew 26:17-27:61**

29 March 2024

Background

This sermon is a shorter reflection as part of the Good Friday Service which focussed on reading almost all of Matthew’s account of the events of the Thursday night (Last Supper, Betrayal, Arrest, Jewish Trial) and of Good Friday (Roman Trial, Crucifixion). The readings were interspersed with Communion, songs and prayers. The sermon was after the reading of Matthew 27:46-54.

My God, My God...

‘Famous Last Words’ is the title of this term’s series, looking at the final chapters of Matthew’s account of the life and ministry of Jesus. And we have just heard the last words of Jesus from the cross as recorded by Matthew.

Across the four gospel accounts we are told of seven times that Jesus speaks whilst on the cross. Matthew records just one: 27:46a *‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sa bach thani?’*

What Jesus said in Aramaic was misunderstood by some listening, but the meaning is clear and Matthew tells us what it means: 27:46b *‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’*

Jesus cries out the opening words of Psalm 22. It’s a psalm of David recalling a time of his distress; a psalm in which the imagery David uses of his distress is now fulfilled literally in the crucifixion of Jesus.

Consider these phrases from Psalm 22:

22:16 They have pierced my hands and my feet.

22:18 They divide my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothing.

22:6-8 I am ... scorned by men and despised by the people.
All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads:
‘He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him.
Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.’

Psalm 22, originally expressing David’s anguish, now playing out as David’s Son, as David’s Lord, as Jesus the Messiah is crucified. Composed a thousand years earlier, and written down hundreds of years before crucifixion had even been thought of - but it fits so well.

And now, after three hours of a strange and terrible darkness, the end is near for Jesus. He is ‘poured out like water,’ his ‘strength is dried up’ (to quote Psalm 22). Each breath is a struggle, but in unspeakable pain, he cries out the opening words of that psalm: ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sa-bach-thani?’ ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

As Jesus hangs there on the cross in physical agony, he is also in spiritual agony. He is carrying the sin of the world, he is taking the punishment for your sin and mine, not just in physical suffering and death, but in separation from God as he is forsaken by God.

Jesus - God the Son, second person of the Trinity - always in perfect relationship and communion with God the Father and with God the Holy Spirit. Even in his humanity Jesus lived in an unbroken relationship with his Father and now for the first time in his human life, the first time in all eternity, he is abandoned, alone, forsaken by God. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

And even if the rest of the psalm wasn't on Jesus' lips it was almost certainly in his mind:

Why are you so far from saving me,
 so far from the words of my groaning?
 O my God, I cry out by day,
 but you do not answer,
 by night, and I am not silent.
 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

It is often called 'the cry of dereliction.' Think of a derelict ship - abandoned - no cargo - bound for no port, and as the Father turns his face away, Jesus not only feels alone and abandoned, he is alone and abandoned; separated from his Father, forsaken by God as he suffers, not for his sin but for ours.

Paul tells us that 'the wages of sin is death' and on the cross - Jesus is receiving the wages for our sin, he is dying - physically and spiritually. The aloneness, the abandonment, the forsaking is God's punishment for sin and is the hell we deserve, but Jesus undergoes it for us. Jesus was forsaken by God, so we don't have to be; Jesus was forsaken, so we can be forgiven.

'All have sinned and fallen short of his glory' and no matter how we try we can't bridge the gap, the gulf that has come between us and God because of our sin. We deserve to be forsaken by him, but God, in His love for us, does something about it. He takes on human flesh, becomes a man - Jesus - and then 'he who was without sin, became sin for us.'

The offer of forgiveness; the offer of a restored relationship with God - now and forever - is all there! But we need to receive the gift that is offered to us, we need to acknowledge that we need God's saving, confess our sin, and call out to him in repentance and faith.

On this Good Friday, if you have not personally responded, and accepted Christ's death in your place, I urge you to do that. Talk to me or Steve, or someone about what it means to do that and how you can do that.

If you have accepted Jesus' death in your place as your Saviour, are you also living for him as your King? And in response to his love, are you growing in that, not to earn his grace, but in response to it?

As we, on this day, have meditated again the power of the cross may we be touched in a way that deepens our love for God as we stand amazed at what he has done for us. He was forsaken, so we can be forgiven.

*This [is] the power of the cross:
 Christ became sin for us;
 took the blame, bore the wrath.
 We stand forgiven at the cross.*

Please stand as we sing together, 'The Power of the Cross.'