

SERMON

Sunday 3rd March 2024, Davidsons Mains Parish Church

Easter Mini-series, The Words of Jesus on the Cross 1.

My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?

BIBLE: Mathew 27:46 and Psalm 22

Introduction

For the last 6 weeks we have been concentrating on a mini series focusing on Ephesians and the gifts to the church.

We've now concluded our APEST series – how did you find it? Interesting? Lots of information?

You've no doubt noticed that the seasons are changing. We're emerging from winter and entering spring.

The first daffodils in my garden opened their weary heads this week and announced to me that spring and Easter are on their way.

Indeed the period that we call Lent began a few weeks ago. I know this because the little children from the local scout group came to visit the church – here they are - [<slide 1>](#)

They came and had a good look around. And afterwards they were going back to eat their pancakes. Incidentally the youngest scouts these days are called Squirrels – they are very sweet indeed.

At DMPC we are marking the run up to Easter with a sermon series which focusses on the words of Jesus, the words that he spoke on the cross and have been recorded for us in the gospels.

[<slide 2>](#)

We're going to have 4 of Jesus' words on the cross from now until Good Friday. Then our Good Friday and Easter Sunday services will follow on.

Journey to the cross

We're starting this week with the words that Margaret read earlier. But I feel like we just need to slow down a minute and recap.

Let's remind ourselves of the journey to the cross, what's happened so far.

Because the Easter story doesn't happen over a few days. Its millennia in the making.

Yes we particularly mark Holy Week as the crescendo.

But let's not rush.

Let's slow ourselves down, catch our breath and see where we are in our narrative.

Because that will help us to look at this passage.

<Slide 3. Globe>

Let's go back to the very beginning. Before the earth was made and only the trinity existed. Only God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And their love for each other. Jesus said – you loved me since the world began.

And our world was brought into existence.

Humankind was created *in the image of God*, yet – as we know – we are fallen. We have done bad things and we continue to do bad things. Humanity is far from God.

Let's skip forwards a long time to when we have some of our first written records of what humanity was thinking and doing. Much of our history was oral – passed on from generation to generation. But eventually it was recorded for us in the scriptures.

And they talk about the Trinity and God's promises. And there is talk of a saviour. One who will come to bring the people back into right relationship with God, to restore our broken world.

More than 3000 years ago, God reveals himself to King David and he records Psalm 22. Psalm 22 is quite long, I asked Margaret to read the highlights of it earlier. but it's worth reading in full if you can.

Psalm 22

Is a lament. It's filled with cries of anguish, but also declarations of faith and adoration of God.

It waxes and wanes between joy and despair. And it makes all sorts of promises. We'll come back to it again later.

<slide 4, birth of Jesus image>

About 1000 years later, at some point over 2000 years ago, a child is born.

Now depending on your perspective he's either an amazing illusionist, or He is the manifestation of God Himself. He is the Son in the Trinity, and he *has continued to speak meaningfully to billions of people, through scripture and prayer.*

The one that was there before the world began. The one that was promised to the people of Israel. The one that was whispered about to David and the prophets.

The Son of God. Eternally connected. Sinless. Loving. Come from heaven into the form of humanity.

He came down from his perfect form, and assumed these imperfect bodies, that we know so well. These bodies that are amazing, we can do so much! but also can creak and break and eventually die.

And he left His perfect relationships within the Trinity, and assumed human relationships, with all their beauty and love, and all their brokenness and pain.

And he lived in modern day Israel and Palestine. And in his lifetime he's recognised by some. He performs miracles. He preaches the Kingdom of God. He fulfils the scriptures. He is loved by thousands.

<slide 5, Palm Sunday image>

He enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to shouts of 'hosanna hosanna'. The crowds quote from the psalms singing 'blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'.

Someone popped their head around the office this week with a hobby horse – they were teaching the story of Palm Sunday at the local Scripture union group. It's always a great week in church where we can wave palm crosses and remember the adoration of the crowds. And the donkey.

But it goes downhill from there. Jesus knows what's going to happen. How the authorities saw Him as a threat. How he would be betrayed.

<slide 6, Last Supper image>

The disciples feast on their last supper, their Passover meal. And Jesus symbolically broke the bread and poured the wine. Knowing that His body would be broken and His blood would be poured out soon enough. That the triumph of Palm Sunday would pass, and that He would be betrayed by fallen humanity. The scripture had foretold it. and this too was part of God's plan.

And they go to the garden of Gethsemane. And he's betrayed with a kiss.

The guards arrest him for claiming to be king of the Jews.

He's tried and despite no wrong being found in Him the crowd want him beaten, lashed and crucified.

Pilot symbolically washes his hands.

Jesus is sentenced to the cruellest of deaths – crucifixion.

<slide 7, crucifixion image>

So the eternal, sinless, perfect, son of God is flogged and nailed to a cross.

The crowd mock him. The soldiers play dice for his clothes. *His friends desert him in fear for their own lives.*

And from high up on the cross. In pain. he shouts these words "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" -which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?".

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

I don't know about you, but I find these some of the most chilling words in the whole bible.

The crucifixion is horrific. The physicality – the torture – the shame and the pain... But God *forsook Him*? The perfect God-man gave up His life – and *God forsook Him*?

That doesn't fit with the character of God. God is loving and forgiving. Jesus is His son who he loved since the very beginning.

...and I guess part of my response to this is fear – it makes me ask... what does that mean for me? Does it mean that God may forsake me too?

What is going on here? And how is this supposed to be good news for us?

This is why we need the big picture. We need the beginning the middle and the end.

Let's go back to **Psalm 22**. The words of God revealed to David. The lament which goes between anguish and triumph. How does it begin? can you remember?

'my God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'. and how does it end? – 'He has done it'. and Jesus on the cross said 'My God my God why have you forsaken me.... and later he cried out... it is 'finished'.

On the cross it appears as though Jesus is reciting Psalm 22. The anguish and the triumph of this lament.

And this sentence is the sentence of anguish. We are not at the triumph yet. We have paused in the pain. And it's hard.

We want to rush to the end – don't we – to the victory cry.
We don't want the reality of this fallen, broken world.

But there is anguish in this psalm. And there is anguish on the cross. And there is anguish in this life.

And it's uncomfortable.

Psalm 22 predictions –

And quoting from Psalm 22 isn't an accident. Jesus is literally hanging on the cross fulfilling its words.

What does it say?... let's look at the words again

<Slide 8 Psalm 22 text>

All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

8 "He trusts in the Lord," they say, "let the Lord rescue him.
Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

...

11 Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

...

they pierce my hands and my feet.

17 All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me.

18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

All written over 1000 years before it happened. Jesus is hanging on the cross, both reciting it and fulfilling its words.

Forsaken

We need the beginning, the middle and the end to understand these words.

My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'

The opening of Psalm 22. Jesus' words upon the cross. When he's at his weakest and worse, he claims them for his own.

Was Jesus forsaken? Well yes. He wouldn't have said it otherwise. The words wouldn't have been foretold.

Jesus was forsaken by God in that moment.

This is the moment in history. One and only. When the perfect Trinity ripped itself apart.

And Why? That's a good question. Why? - For us. You. Me. fallen humanity.

Jesus, the eternal and sinless, was the only possible sacrifice that could be made that would repair the rift between God and humanity.

In that singular moment, He was forsaken,... so that we would not be.

He experienced it. He took on that insurmountable pain, far worse than any nail or whip, the severing of his relationship with God.

So that we don't have to.

He's not complaining about the excruciating physical pain. He's lamenting the fracturing of His relationship with God.

He knew it was coming. He said it was coming.

He entered into it knowingly. Knowing both the price and the prize.

In the garden of Gethsemane he prays 'Not my will, but yours be done'.

He paid the full price. All the consequences of our brokenness. So that we may be united with our creator God. So that *we* may *never* have to experience being forsaken by God.

Even when things are awful, which they sometimes are in life, God will not forsake us. That price has been paid.

Never again will anyone cry out 'my God my God why have you forsaken me?' and it be true. This is a once only, from the dawn of time until the end, event.

Forsaken

We have been running a course on Thursday evenings in the café recently on Unanswered prayer. Some folk here have been coming along.

And it's been tough, hasn't it?

We've shared some of our darkest moments. And asked the big questions. Where is God when things get tough? Has he forsaken us? Is He listening? Does He care?

It's been tough.

And the presenters of the prayer course shared this video of Alan which I'd like to share with you. Alan is a young man who lost his wife to brain cancer. They were young and beautiful and smart and they loved God. They were good people with their whole lives before them. but Alan's life was turned upside down by the sickness and eventual death of his wife.

Here he shares his story a bit and talks about how he came to understand that sacrifice of Jesus with greater clarity. How it meant that he was *not* forsaken. Not at all. That because Jesus suffered and gave himself on the cross. Because he was willing, in his perfect state, to suffer, He takes it for us. We will not be forsaken.

<video clip here please>

I think just about any parent can understand what Alan's dad said. If we can take away our children's pain – we will – won't we? We're rather take it ourselves than see those whom we love suffer.

And our Father in heaven wanted to take it from us. He didn't want us to suffer the cost of our sins. And so He paid the ultimate price. He gave Himself.

<slide 9, cross and forsaken text – keep displayed until the end of sermon>

My God my God why have you forsaken me? asked Jesus. Jesus did it for us. He took it for you. He took it for me.

He, in that moment, severed His eternal relationship with God, because He loves us like a father. Who wants to take it from us. So He did.

Jesus' cry gives us permission to cry out in our pain and know that God is there. Sitting on the end of the bed. Present in a very real sense. Going through it with us.

He has opened the gates to relationship with God. The gates to the Kingdom were opened by the only one who could do it. It was the only way.

Jesus went through all of that then. All of that. He won't abandon us now. In our darkest days He is here.

What's true in the light is true in the dark. What's true on a good day, is true when you're in the pit of despair.

What true the day you're born is true the day you leave this world.

What's true on your wedding day, is true the day your loved one fails.

God will not forsake you. Jesus has made sure of that.

He was willing to be forsaken so that we would not have to be. The price is paid.

Conclusion

So in this season that we call Lent. As we walk slowly to the cross.

Through both celebration, like last week – which brought joy like Palm Sunday.

And trepidation, we know the suffering, it's hard to acknowledge.

It's hard to hear our own voices amongst the scoffers – we sang that it our hymn earlier didn't we? 'I hear my voice call out among the scoffers' – it's hard. we know we are one of the scoffers. Don't we?

We want to rush towards the end. The victory of Easter.

But we can't hide from it. We can't paint a smiley face over it. or have a faith that only does Christmas, but never Easter. Only joy, never pain.

This season is hard. And suffering is hard. Because it's real. And it affects all our lives. And we know that Jesus suffered something beyond where our hearts and minds can go.

But the son of God did it for you. And for me and for us.

And for that knowledge - that we can always turn to God, in our joy and in our pain, and He will always be there. For *that* we can be eternally thankful.

Pray

Father I want to thank you for the cross.

We confess that we shrink away from the thought of the suffering of Jesus.

Yet we reap the reward. A God who will never forsake us.

Thank you. That you paid the price. So we do not have to.

We stand amazed in your presence.
Amen