

Good Friday Tenebrae Service

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Preacher: Andrew Rim

[0 : 00] For those of you who don't know me, my name is Andrew Rimm, and I'm one of the pastoral interns here at Trinity Cambridge Church. And tonight, it's my honor and privilege to share the word of God with you all.

Our scripture reading for tonight comes from Psalm 22. Psalm 22, verse 1 through 18. Let me pray for the reading of the word.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you sent your only son, Jesus, the light of the world, to come into darkness and to die as the propitiation for our sins.

Lord, though we know, though we know in two days, your son will rise again.

Lord, we gather tonight to lament, to remember, to feel the gravity of what it meant for your son to be sacrificed. And so, Lord, in this reading and preaching of your word, we ask for the power of your Holy Spirit to illuminate your word into our hearts.

[1 : 24] To show us the majesty of Jesus. In all his humility. In all his being mocked and scorned. That even as he died on the cross, we look to him in worship.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please remain standing with me as we read. Psalm 22.

To the choir master, according to the doe of the dawn, a psalm of David. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? Oh, my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer.

And by night, but I find no rest. Yet you are holy. Enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you, our fathers trusted.

[2 : 30] They trusted and you delivered them. To you, they cried and were rescued. In you, they trusted and were not put to shame. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

All who see me mock me. They make mouths at me. They wag their heads. He trusts in the Lord. Let him deliver him. Let him rescue him, for he delights in him.

Yet you are he who took me from the womb. You made me trust you at my mother's breast. On you was I cast from my birth. And from my mother's womb, you have been my God.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help. Many bulls encompass me. Strong bulls of Bashan surround me.

They open wide their mouths at me like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax.

[3 : 33] It is melted within my breast. My strength is dried up like a pot shirt and my tongue sticks to my jaws. You lay me in the dust of death.

For dogs encompass me. A company of evildoers encircles me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me.

They divide my garments among them. And for my clothing they cast lots. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Imagine with me for one moment.

That one day, you suddenly lost one of your five senses. You wake up one morning. And upon opening your eyes, you cannot see anything at all.

Just nothingness. Or one day, you lose your hearing fully. You can see people's lips moving. You expect to hear sounds around you.

[4 : 46] But instead, there's just sonic void. Or you suddenly lose the ability to taste or smell things. The food that you typically enjoy eating has become completely blank, bland in flavor.

Or you lose your sense of touch. And your motor controls. Like walking, holding things. Or embracing your loved ones. It becomes incredibly difficult, if not impossible.

All your life, you know what you perceive, what you experience through your five senses. But even if just one of those were to suddenly disappear, were to suddenly be taken away, suddenly deprived, you would feel disoriented.

You would feel panicked. You would feel afraid. We take for granted that sort of familiarity in our lives. But as soon as we experience that loss of that familiarity, fear, grief, and even pain can begin to creep in.

Tonight, our passage in Psalm 22 is a lament of loss. David, the king of Israel, a man who's written countless psalms of praise to God, feels a deprivation of God's presence.

[6 : 08] A presence that he's been familiar with and known for all his life. And so, in this psalm, he expresses his disorientation, his panic, his fear.

But he also remembers who he's crying out to. The Lord God Almighty. The God of Israel. And David turns to the Lord in prayer and supplication.

And this is characteristic of the psalms of lament. As Pastor Mark Rogop says in his book, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*, the psalmist's complaints are not cul-de-sacs of sorrow.

Not these dead ends that make you go round and round in despair. Rather, Godly lament, it builds bridges that leads to trust in God's character.

And so, David's lament will go from groaning to remembering and trusting in God's faithfulness in the psalm. But Psalm 22 is also a prophetic psalm.

[7 : 12] Realized and fulfilled in the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ a thousand years after David's life and reign. Tonight, on Good Friday, we remember that as Jesus is drawing his final breaths on the cross, he quotes the first line of the psalm.

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Jesus, too, experiences the deprivation of God's familiar presence as he is hanged on the tree.

And as he utters this first line of the psalm, the rest of the psalm cascades out in prophetic fulfillment through the scenes of Jesus' crucifixion until it is finished and Jesus breathes his last.

And so, our main point for tonight is this. Jesus was forsaken on the cross by God the Father so that we would not be forsaken.

As we examine this psalm, I'll touch on three points. First, our groaning to God. Second, remembering who God is. And third, be not far from me.

[8 : 28] David begins his psalm with the following line, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We don't know the specific time and place in which David composed this psalm.

However, with just these first words, we see the great distress that David is in. He is scorned and despised by those around him, surrounded and threatened by his opponents, and to his dismay, seemingly forsaken and abandoned by God.

The repetition of the phrase, My God, my God, has significant meaning in this opening. First, repetition in the psalms characterizes intense emotion, intensifying emotion.

It's like when we repeatedly say, Oh no, oh no, oh no, more and more urgently when something has gone horribly wrong. David is not just simply sighing at some mild inconveniences in his life.

He's crying out intensely to his God in extreme agony. In many cultures, grieving is expressed with that outward intensity.

[9 : 35] For example, in the Korean tradition, there's this type of lamentation called *Shinse tariong* that involves the beating of one's chest, rhythmic wailing and singing, grieving over the losses and hardships of life.

And many other cultures have similar emotions of beating the chest, tearing clothes, singing and wailing as an expression of their grief. And so in similar fashion, we can imagine the first lines of Psalm 22, beginning not with a quiet, introspective murmur, but with a passionate and zealous cry, My God!

My God! Why have you forsaken me? Second, this repetition shows us that while David feels forsaken by God, he does not forget his relationship with God.

This is not a God who David knows vaguely as a mere acquaintance. This is my God. My God who I have had a relationship with. David could have just written, Oh God of Israel, why have you forsaken me?

But he cries out to the one who was relationally close to him, You are my God. You're who I turn to. Why have you forsaken me? And even when it seems like God is far away and not answering him, David cries out, day and night, uttering words of groaning to the Lord.

[11 : 04] These weren't grumblings of prideful, entitled dissatisfaction against God, but rather groanings of pain and sadness, pleading to find reprieve from his deep troubles.

And yet David hears no answer, no inclination of salvation from his woes. For David, who spent his years communing with God and enjoying his presence, this is an unfamiliar and disorienting new reality.

It's excruciating that he receives no answer, no response to his pleas, no reason to his why. David's anguish continues in verse 6.

In the previous verses, David remembers how his ancestors too once cried out to the Lord, and he rescued them out of their troubles. And yet, here David is, without an answer from the Lord for his own hardships.

David feels minimized, less than human, because God is absent from him, leaving him to be the object of scorn and disdain from the people.

[12 : 15] David was aware, as we see in many of his other psalms, that God is great. God is far greater than humans could ever be. But in this moment, David feels his own littleness, not because of God's greatness, but because of his absence.

Without God, David feels subhuman, the lowest of the created order, like a worm squirming in the earth, a worm that spoils and rots everything from manna to dead bodies, much to the repulsion of the people.

Picture the scene in verse 7 and 8 for a moment. David, King David, a man after God's own heart, is collapsed on the ground in a heap, disheveled and broken, crying out to the Lord for help.

The people surrounding David leer over him. They mock him with their words. They insult him with their facial expressions by making mouths at him and wagging, shaking their heads at him in derision.

Look at this joke. How pathetic. He says he trusts in the Lord, then let God deliver him. Yeah, that's right. Let God rescue David, since he says he delights in him.

[13 : 36] The mockers jeer at David, essentially challenging him, where is your God now, David? Brothers and sisters, the reality is that we too will be on the receiving end of mocking, belittling, and despising for our faith if we haven't already.

Have you ever been made fun of for trusting God? Have you ever been mocked by your peers for avoiding drunkenness and debauchery, being called a prude, a goody two-shoes, or a straight-up loser?

Have you ever been reprimanded by your family, being told that you're wasting your weekend by going to church on Sundays when you can be networking and applying yourself toward your career? In the moment, these insults, the scorn, it stings and hurts.

But when we remember why we fight these temptations, why we gather every Sunday for worship, and who we do it all for, we're reminded that we serve a God who was, who is, and who always will be faithful to his people.

And that's what David does. Amidst his groaning and his agony, David remembers who God is and what he has done to exemplify his faithfulness.

[14 : 59] David pivots his focus from his present troubles to God's holiness, his kingship, and his praiseworthiness in verse three. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

The phrase yet you indicates that there is a contrast being made here. Even though David is not hearing God answer his cries, he still remembers what he knows to be true about God, that he is holy, that he is enthroned and sovereign, and that he is worthy of praise.

David sheds further light on this in the following verses four and five. In you our fathers trusted, they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued, in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

David remembers how his forefathers trusted in God, and God heard their cries and rescued them, not putting them to shame. While David doesn't reference any specific instances of God's deliverance, the Exodus narrative may come to mind as a prime example of God rescuing his people.

Exodus chapter two, 23 to 25 says, the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help, and God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

[16:19] God saw the people of Israel, and God knew. God heard the cries of the Israelites in their slavery and rescued them out of Egypt. David could probably remember many other examples of God's faithfulness to help his people.

In the wilderness, on the way to the promised land, as the Israelites conquered the promised land, the judges sent by God to deliver Israel from oppression, the kings he established to rule and govern over Israel, in all these things, God had revealed himself as a holy God set apart from all things, a sovereign God ruling over the nations and dealing with enemies with justice, and a praiseworthy God worthy of worship and reverence by his people.

David reminisces of what God has done in the past, and yet, that is not what he has been experiencing in the present. David's been feeling the pain, he's been feeling the suffering, and he's been crying out to God to save him, but God is not answering.

While God saved Israel and was the object of their praise, God seems to have abandoned David and is the object of his interrogations. Why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me? David pivots again from present despair to faithful remembrance in verses 9 and 10.

[17:53] Yet you are he who took me from the womb. You made me trust you at my mother's breast. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God.

This time, David contrasts his grieving over the people's mockery of him to remembering God's care and provision for him. David reflects on how God was his caretaker and providence since before birth, and how David was made to trust in God since infancy.

Just as God was a close and relational God to David's fathers, God has also been close and relational to David for all his life. And that's what makes his abandonment of David now all the more painful, all the more confusing.

There's something so genuine about David as he oscillates between lamenting over his situation and remembering who God is. He does this back and forth, back and forth.

David could have so easily written this psalm in neat, separate compartments, a stanza dedicated to his agony, a section dedicated to God's faithfulness, but instead, David, he depicts the raw emotions, the real-time internal dialogue that he's having, that he's going through as he processes his pain and grief juxtaposed to his memories of who God is.

[19:18] He feels forsaken and abandoned by God. But then he remembers how God has been so good and so faithful to his people for generations.

But still, the mockery, the derision of his peers makes him feel small and weak. But then he reflects on how God has been so close, has been his help and his providence from birth.

How do we lament? How do we bring our grievances to the Lord? When we bring our own burdens to the Lord, we too will most likely go back and forth, back and forth from groaning about our circumstances to remembering God's character.

Maybe some of you are currently discouraged from being in a long period of waiting for job prospects. Lamenting to the Lord can look like this. Lord, I'm so discouraged from not being able to get that job.

Why am I not wanted? And yet, I'm reminded of how you've been so good to me amidst my job search. You've provided all that I need plus more, and I thank you that I lack nothing.

[20:36] But still, each day that I don't hear back from job opportunities feels like a day wasted. I feel unproductive and tired, and I'm not sure how much longer I can wait. Yet you, Lord, are my comfort, and you've brought me hope and refreshment through your word every day, and I will trust in that.

Some of you, maybe, are hurting and lamenting over the loss of loved ones. I remember when my grandma passed away a couple years ago.

My grief came in waves to the Lord. I remember crying for days when I found out she passed, and I felt helpless that I couldn't make it out to Korea to be with my family to mourn.

But I was reminded of God's faithfulness in my grandma's life and was thankful that she was a woman of faith, constantly praying for me and reading, reciting scripture even as her memory started to fade and even as her body grew weaker and weaker.

And yet still, there would be days where I dearly missed her, and I was sad that I wouldn't be able to see her anymore. But I found comfort in knowing that I will see her again one day when we meet with the Lord and that even in death, God is working all things together for good for those who are

called according to his purpose.

[22 : 00] While we don't always understand the whys of our griefs and troubles, like David, we can endure the suffering by clinging to what we know about our God, who is eternally unchanging, who is always good and forever faithful.

2 Corinthians 1, 3-4 attests, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

We can believe this trustworthy word, that God will comfort us in all our afflictions, no matter how painful they may be. And when we trust in the Lord, we are able to endure and we're able to boldly let our requests be known to him.

And we see David do exactly that. He casts his trust onto the Lord and he appeals to him.

He appeals to God after remembering who he is. David cries out in verse 11, Be not far from me.

This is David's request, a solution to his main concern, his main struggle, his feeling abandoned by God.

[23 : 27] Be not far from me. Draw near to me, O God. All of this is bearable, the mockery of the people, the suffering and rejection when you are with me.

David has felt the comfort and confidence of being in God's presence in the past. In 1 Samuel 17, before he fights and kills Goliath of the Philistines, David says to the doubting King Saul, The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of the Philistines.

David prevailed even when it seemed like the odds were against him because God was with him. But now, with God's absence in his life, David feels the fear of his troubles assailing him and he pleads to God, Be not far from me for trouble is near and there is none to help.

Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me. Bashan was a region that God had set aside in the promised land for the Israelites to inhabit in Deuteronomy.

The fertile land of Bashan was known for raising up healthy cattle, hence the strong bulls of Bashan. However, the king of Bashan, Og, fiercely opposed Israel in the promised land and its strength and its size made him a formidable enemy.

[24 : 56] And so, the enemies who surrounded David were like the strong bulls of Bashan, powerful and fearsome, intimidating David with their open mouths like a ravaging and roaring lion.

David compares his enemies to other animals in verse 16. for dogs encompass me. A company of evil doors encircles me. They have pierced my hands and feet. Like ferocious wild dogs, David's enemies circle him, ready to enact evil upon him.

In fact, they've already done David harm by piercing his hands and his feet like fangs that sink into flesh. And the effects of such affliction, the effects of these attacks are described so vividly.

Verse 14, I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax. It is melted within my breast. David is physically collapsing from his afflictions like water that cascades down.

When bones are out of joint, they have no way to be held together and eventually fall apart. Wax that is held to a flame can no longer hold itself up.

[26 : 12] It's melted. And all this imagery shows how weakened David has become. My strength is dried up like a pot shirt.

My tongue sticks to my jaws like a dried up piece of pottery that's been sitting in the oven for too long. He's weakened and frail to the point that his tongue is dehydrated and parched and it sticks to his mouth.

And David says to God, you lay me in the dust of death. God had formed Adam by the dust of the earth. And when Adam and Eve had sinned against him in Genesis 3, God curses humanity saying, for you are dust and to dust you shall return.

David is cognizant that he, along with all of humanity, will suffer the consequences of Adam's curse. He does not blame God for this near-death experience, but he recognizes that God is the sole sovereignty over life and death.

And it's by God's will, by his will, David has been laying in the dust of death. And so David, dried up and emaciated, he can count all his bones from how thin he has become.

[27 : 38] And rather than pity him, his tormentors stare and they gawk at David like he's a circus act or a caged animal. And they continue to gloat over him and mock him in his tortured state.

And like spoils of war, his enemies begin dividing his garments between themselves, casting lots for his clothing as if David had already died. It's truly a gruesome and harrowing scene.

And once more, we see in verse 19 that David cries out in desperation, but you, oh Lord, do not be far off. Oh, you, my help, come quickly to my aid.

Psalm 22 at its core is David's lament to God because he felt forsaken and abandoned by him. He cries out because he can't perceive God's presence amidst suffering and he desires for God to be near to him as the comforter and deliverer of his troubles.

And if we were to read the rest of the psalm, which we won't do tonight, we will see that God did not abandon David. God delivered David from his enemies and tribulations and David was able to feel and enjoy the presence of God and his life once more.

[28 : 55] But like I said before, Psalm 22 is not only a reflection of David's experience of suffering. Psalm 22 is also a remarkably specific prophetic psalm fulfilled through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

So much of Psalm 22 was realized through Jesus' crucifixion and the gospel accounts will attest to this. Like David, Jesus was scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

As Jesus was crucified, Matthew 27 39 says that those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads. The scribes and elders mocked Jesus in the same way David was mocked.

Matthew 27 43, they said, he trusts in God. Let God deliver him now if he desires him. Just as the evildoers encircled David and pierced his hands and feet, our Lord Jesus was pierced in his hands and feet to hang on the cross as he was surrounded by his enemies.

And as he hung on that cross, his body began to collapse, his bones straining away from their joints, his heart progressing to failure, his mouth drying up only to be fed sour wine to slake his thirst.

[30 : 15] Those who crucified him cast lots to divide his garments, his robes among themselves. And once Jesus breathed his last, they pierced his side and he was poured out like water.

And finally, he was buried, laid in the dust of death. Hauntingly specific. This could not have been premeditated or staged and yet each of these elements of Psalm 22 were precisely fulfilled through Jesus' death on the cross.

And at the climax of his crucifixion, the cry of forsakenness comes to its fullest prophetic realization in Jesus. In Psalm 22, David cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Because he felt abandoned by God. But our Lord and Savior, Jesus, cried out the very same thing, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Because on the cross he was truly forsaken by God. And Jesus was forsaken by God on the cross so that we would not be forsaken. If God is an infinitely holy and good God, then any transgression or infraction against him is an abomination to him.

[31 : 44] And if God is an infinitely just God, then any sin committed against him will not go unpunished. That is why the consequence of Adam's rebellion was the curse of death.

The wages of sin is death, eternal separation from God. And so all of humanity in our sinful nature, we've all fallen short of God's holiness, his glory, and we deserve the divine wrath and divine justice of God.

But God in his great love and mercy gave his one and only son, Jesus, to die on our behalf. Jesus, the perfect son of God, the perfect son who was in eternal fellowship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, humbled himself by taking on human flesh to be despised and rejected by men, to be betrayed by his closest friends, and to be subjected to the most humiliating death of hanging on a cross.

2 Corinthians 5.21 says, for our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This was the Father's will. God's will. This was all part of the plan for redemption. Jesus, the spotless lamb who never sinned, in perfect obedience, carried the weight of our sin upon his shoulders and bore the divine wrath of God, the abandonment and forsakenness that we deserved as the propitiation for our sins.

[33 : 31] Ephesians chapter 2 verse 13 says, but now in Christ Jesus, you, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

David's cry for help, for God to not be far off from him, is fulfilled for all of humanity through the blood of Christ. We who are far off, we're alienated in our sin and rebellion, are brought near to the throne of grace that we can be in God's presence and this could only be accomplished by Jesus being forsaken by his father.

How great the pain of searing loss. The father turns his face away. God didn't turn his face away because Jesus' crucifixion was too gruesome, too horrific to look at.

This is a personification of God abandoning and forsaking his son, Jesus. Jesus, in bearing that divine wrath, was truly forsaken by God.

In order to take all of our sins, past, present, and future, and atone for them fully, the son of God had to be crushed by the father. Jesus wasn't just feeling forsaken on the cross, as David did in his sufferings.

[34 : 58] as theologian Herman Boving puts it, Jesus experienced an objective God forsakenness at Calvary. His feeling was not an illusion, not based on a false view of his situation, but corresponded with reality.

Jesus was really forsaken by his father, and who Jesus closely called my father throughout the gospel of Matthew has now become more distant, my God.

Of course, the relationship of the triune God was not severed on the cross. Jesus continues to be the second person of the holy trinity, but in that moment, Jesus truly experienced separation from his father, and he truly died in his human nature, and in doing so, Jesus both expresses the horrors, the horrors of the separation from God, and yet he also fulfills the will of his father by crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And it's because Jesus went through such forsakenness on our behalf that he is able to also say triumphantly with his final breath, it is finished.

17th century English spirit and Thomas Brooks, he sums up why Jesus' crucifixion is so significant to the Christian.

[36 : 37] He says, the more we ascribe to Christ's offering, the less remains of ours.

the more painfully that he suffered, the more fully are we redeemed. The greater his sorrow was, the greater our solace.

His dissolution is our consolation, his cross our comforts, his annoy our endless joy, his distress and soul our release, his calamity our comfort, his misery our mercy, his adversity our felicity, and his hell our heaven.

Church, in two days, we will celebrate Christ's resurrection, the triumphant defeat over sin and death in the grave.

But we cannot feel the insurmountable joy of Easter Sunday without understanding, without remembering, without lamenting over the overwhelming agony of Good Friday.

[38 : 08] Good Friday is only good because our Savior was forsaken. so that we would never be forsaken. What an incredible work of love and mercy from our King.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord, oh, Lord, our rock and our Redeemer.

It should have been us, Lord. It should have been us to bear the weight of our sin, of our guilt and shame.

It should have been us to be forsaken by our God, for our sinfulness, for our rebellion against him. But you, Lord, have been so infinitely gracious and kind that you would send your son, Jesus, to die for us.

Lord, we'll never know how painful it was to bear all that burden. Lord, help us to be a people who turn to you amidst our lament.

[39 : 40] Help us to look at the cross as we remember your death, to see the gravity, the weight of your sacrifice on behalf of us.

in your holy and gracious name we pray. Amen.