

The Forsaken Son of God (Good Friday)

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 0 0] Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we ask that you now address us from your word so that we might know your love that sent your only son to save us, that we might know the love of Christ who willingly laid down his life for us, that your love might be poured out into our hearts by the Spirit, assuring us we are your children, that we can call upon you as Abba, Father.

So Lord, meet with us here. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 27, verses 27 to 54.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him, and they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him.

And twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.

And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

[1 : 5 8] As they went out, they found the man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means place of a skull, they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gal.

But when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots.

Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head, they put the charge against him, which read, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself.

If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. So also the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him, saying, He saved others.

[3 : 1 1] He cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

He trusts in God. Let God deliver him now. If he desires him. For he said, I am the Son of God.

And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lima sabachthani. That is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And some of the bystanders hearing it said, This man is calling Elijah. And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.

[4 : 24] But the other said, Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit.

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn into, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, Truly, this was the Son of God.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. Around eight months old is when a baby develops what developmental psychologists call object permanence.

[5 : 41] Prior to that point, when infants can't see you, they think that you've disappeared off the face of the planet. In their world, whether it's their favorite toy or blanket or even their parents, when they can't see them, they have disappeared as far as they're concerned.

But as they begin to learn object permanence, they realize that the objects are somewhere even when they can't see them. And for that reason, it's around that same time that babies also develop what they call separation anxiety.

Now that the baby knows that her mom and dad still exist somewhere, even when she can't see them, she now misses them. And she's saddened by the realization that they are somewhere but not there with her.

She now understands the pain of separation. That's a really difficult time to leave the child with babysitters or to drop them off at a daycare because she will cry these sad, forlorn cries and with her arms extended out to you, tears streaming down her face as if she will never see you again.

As if you're leaving her forever. And even though you, as a parent, know better, you know that you're leaving her in good hands and you know that you're coming back, it's still heartbreaking to watch and hear the baby's desperate cry because you know what she is feeling.

[7 : 12] Separations are hard. But being actually forsaken by someone you love is even harder. In this passage, we see the Son of God forsaken.

In verses 27 to 31, we see him forsaken by the Gentiles he came to save. In verses 32 to 44, we see him forsaken by his very own people, the Jews.

And then in verses 45 to 54, we see him forsaken by God, his Father who sent him. This passage is shot through with sorrow, loss, and anguish.

But Jesus endures all of it because he knows that there is no other way to save sinners like you and me. The Son of God was forsaken in death so that we might be accepted by God and brought from death to life.

First, we find in verses 27 to 31, Jesus being utterly degraded and humiliated by the Roman soldiers. He says in verse 27 that the soldiers of the Roman governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters and they gathered the whole battalion before him.

[8 : 22] on what might have been an ordinary, boring day in the lives of these soldiers, they find themselves in custody of a supposed king of the Jews and that to them was too good of an opportunity to pass up.

So they gathered the whole battalion before them which was usually about 600 men. 600 men gathering to mock and make sport of this one man.

It's like a hazing ritual at a frat house except much worse. It's not an initiation ritual. It's preparation for Jesus' execution. Verses 28 to 31 describe their actions.

And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him and twisting together a crown of thorns. They put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head and when they had mocked him they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. First they forcibly removed Jesus' clothing from his back.

[9 : 29] Then they play with him like a doll making mockery of his claim to kingship. They put a scarlet robe on him. The word robe used here refers specifically to the military cloak, the scarlet robe that the soldiers wore.

And so that cheap soldier's robe takes the place, represents the expensive purple royal robe. And in place of a crown bejeweled with precious stones, they put on Jesus a makeshift, twisted together, crown of thorns and they laid on his head.

And instead of a golden scepter, they put a reed, a stick, in his right hand. It's a ridiculous scene. It's a pitiful scene.

And then kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! You could just imagine the dripping sarcasm in their tone and the defiance and insolence in their wild eyes and the boisterous laughter erupting among the hundreds of soldiers.

They spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. Being sped on and being struck on the head are both grievous insults in this culture.

[10 : 42] So Jesus is here being defiled and insulted in every way. Your Royal Highness, please hand me your scepter. Let me hold it for a moment. And smack.

Clobber him across the head. Which is followed by another round of jeering and boisterous laughter. Imagine if someone did this to you. How utterly degraded, wronged, abused and less than human you would feel.

And the irony of it all is that despite the Gentile soldiers' mockery, Jesus is the true King of the Jews. He is the promised Messiah.

And it makes the fire of indignation rise up on our faces to see the true King mocked in this way. And we ask ourselves, why, Jesus, did you do nothing?

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus has cleansed the leper, calmed the stormy seas, exorcised demons, healed the paralytic, raised the dead to life. Jesus couldn't do something to stop this from happening?

[11 : 49] They could mock me and spit on me. I'm just a lowly commoner and a sinner, but you're the King, Jesus.

You're the Holy One. Why must you suffer such unspeakable indignities at the hands of sinful men? And when they mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, it says in verse 32, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, and they compelled this man to carry the cross. According to Roman custom, the condemned man was supposed to carry his own cross to the execution site.

But the fact that they have to compel a passerby to carry Jesus' cross shows that Jesus was incapable of doing so himself. After the flogging and the beating, Jesus was already so physically debilitated and exhausted that he could not carry the cross all the way to the place of a skull.

And when they finally get there, he says in verse 34, that they offered him wine to drink mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. A little later, Matthew mentions again in verse 48 that one of the bystanders at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.

[13 : 10] These details might seem extraneous to us. Who cares that these people are giving him something to drink? Matthew is noting these offers of drink to show that Jesus is fulfilling the prophecies of Scripture.

In Psalm 69, 17 to 21, a righteous person who is suffering unjustly cries out to God this way, Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress.

Make haste to answer me, draw near to my soul, redeem me, ransom me because of my enemies. You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor.

My foes are all known to you. Reproaches have broken my heart so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.

They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst, they gave me sour wine to drink. In the Psalm's original context, the righteous sufferer finds no one to comfort him in the midst of his suffering.

[14 : 10] People reproach him and offer him poison for food and sour wine for drink, a wine that has gone bad. Such is the case here. Jesus is offered wine mixed with gall, a bitter drink.

Later, they offer him sour wine. The pungent smell of the wine that had gone bad would have pierced Jesus' nose immediately. Miserable comforters are they all.

And then verse 35 continues, and when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Men were, in those days, crucified naked.

So after removing his garments, the soldiers cast lots to see who would get it, who would get to keep it. Which is particularly shameful for Jews who consider that kind of nakedness and exposure unacceptable, culturally, societally unacceptable.

So the shame, the exposure of it all, all of Jesus' body, all his blood, sweat, and tears, all of his wounds, nakedly exposed for all to see.

[15 : 22] And on top of all this, the cruel mockery continues in verse 39. It says, those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads. Verse 41 says, so also the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him.

Even, it says, the robbers who were crucified with Jesus also reviled him in the same way. So from the Jewish criminals that have been crucified with him to the passerbys, to the chief priests, and the elders, Jesus is rejected by every stratum of Jewish society.

Jesus is forsaken by his very own people. And what's worse is that Jesus is forsaken even by his own disciples.

Isn't it interesting that Simon of Cyrene is mentioned by name in verse 32? He's just an extra, a person who happens to be passing by, has a minor role in the story.

His name recalls Simon, another more famous Simon, Simon Peter, who had insisted to Jesus in chapter 26 that even if all the other disciples were to fall away on account of him, that he would never fall away.

[16 : 35] Peter has said to Jesus, even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. But having denied Jesus three times in the preceding chapter, Simon Peter is nowhere to be seen.

Earlier in Matthew 16, 24, Jesus had challenged his disciples saying, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

But none of his disciples are here to help Jesus carry his literal cross. Instead of denying themselves, they have denied the Lord. Similarly, earlier in Matthew 20, 20 to 28, the mother of James and John requested of Jesus, say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left in your kingdom.

However, as Jesus ascends the cross to usher in his kingdom, John and James are nowhere nearby to flank him on his right and on his left.

Instead, look who's to Jesus' left and right in verse 38, then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

[17 : 53] Jesus is completely deserted, forsaken by the Jews, by his own people, by even his own disciples. How often have we also as his followers failed him in the same way?

And yet, this is a cross that Jesus must bear alone. Only his shoulders can bear the weight. The Gentile soldiers' mockery of Jesus was understandably more of a political nature, mocking his kingship, but here, the Jews' mockery of Jesus prominently featured religious themes.

They say to him in verse 40, you who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you are the son of God, come down from the cross. Jesus had taught in Matthew 12, 6, referring to himself, I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

And we know from John 2 that Jesus did say, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. But there, he was not talking about the literal physical temple building, but about his own body, that he would die but be raised on the third day.

He was saying that the temple is now being made obsolete because the new and greater temple, Jesus himself, is here and he will in himself with his own body offer the ultimate sacrifice so that the sacrifices of the temple are no longer necessary.

[19 : 23] But the Jews are here mocking that claim. And the conditional phrase, if you are the son of God, echoes the devil's temptations of Jesus in chapter 4.

The devil said repeatedly, if you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. If you are the son of God, throw yourself down from the pinnacle of this temple for then God will command his angels to protect you lest your feet strike a stone.

Once again, the devil uses these mockers in the crowd to cast into question Jesus' identity as the son of God. If you are the son of God, come down from the cross.

It's a question that cuts to the heart. And if you are a follower of Christ, I'm sure that the devil has posed this same question to you numerous times as well.

So, if you are a child of God, why were you abused as a child? If you are a child of God, then why did you not get that job?

[20 : 41] If you are a child of God, then why did you get dumped by your boyfriend? If you are a child of God, then why is your son not growing up the way you want him to?

If you are a child of God, then why did your mother die? If you have heard the sinister whisper of Satan in the past, then you are not alone.

Jesus has been there. Jesus has heard it all. Jesus knows what you are going through. The chief priests with the scribes and elders also deride Jesus in verses 42 to 43.

He saved others, cannot save himself. They're ridiculing Jesus' claim to be the savior.

If you claim to heal others, then show your power now by healing yourself. Doctor, if you claim to be the son of God, if you have really done miracles too numerous to count, then surely now is the time for a miracle.

[21 : 55] Let's see if you can save yourself from this cross. But the irony, once again, is that Jesus is the savior of the world.

Jesus is the king of Israel, and Jesus is the son of God. they don't understand that in order to be the savior, Jesus must die on the cross for the sins of his people.

They don't understand that it is precisely because he is the obedient son of God that he is now subjecting himself to this shameful death in accordance with the will of God his father.

Matthew employs the language of Psalm 22 that Daniel helpfully read for us this evening to describe the Jews' rejection of Jesus.

And Jesus is using this language to show that he is fulfilling these messianic prophecies and that even though it seems like things are going terribly awry, that everything's actually happening in accordance with God's sovereign plan.

[23 : 00] The Jews passing by derided him, wagging their heads in verse 39. That language is taken directly from Psalm 22 verse 7. Those Jewish leaders say in verse 43, he trusts in God, let God deliver him now if he desires him.

That's also taken from Psalm 22 verse 8 when they're mocking the righteous sufferer. And in Psalm 22 16 to 18, it's also prophesied that evil doors will encircle the Messiah, piercing his hands and feet, staring and gloating over him and casting lots for his clothing, all of which are quite literally fulfilled in Jesus' crucifixion.

This is not a mistake. This is happening exactly according to God's plan, his salvation plan. Having been forsaken by both Gentiles and Jews, we see in verses 45 to 54 that Jesus is forsaken even by God the Father himself.

As if in anticipation of the death of the light of the world, an inexplicable darkness comes over the land for three hours leading up to Jesus' death. This darkness recalls the ninth penultimate disaster that God brings upon Egypt for their refusal to let his people go from their slavery.

At that time, the ninth plague, the darkness fell over Egypt for three days and similarly here, darkness falls over Jerusalem for three hours. And at the time of the Exodus, the darkness preceded the tenth and final disaster where the angel of death killed the firstborn sons of Egypt.

[24 : 36] The Israelites, too, were vulnerable in that time because they were also deserving of death because of their sins and they were also vulnerable to the angel of death going through Egypt but they were spared only because they killed an unblemished male lamb and smeared its blood around the doorposts of their houses as they were instructed to do.

That Passover lamb was the substitute that took the place of their firstborn sons. Likewise, here, the darkness that falls over Jerusalem precedes the death of the firstborn son.

Jesus is the Passover lamb who dies the death that God's people deserved for their sins. After three hours of darkness, it says in verse 46 that Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.

That is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That's a direct quote from Psalm 22, verse 1.

This is the most painful and heart-wrenching aspect of Jesus' death. The beloved, incarnate Son of God, the one who perfectly obeyed the Father, the one who has enjoyed up to this point perfect, intimate, unbroken communion with his Father is here, forsaken by God himself.

[26 : 09] not absolutely or permanently since after Jesus has completed making atonement for the sins of his people by dying on the cross, God the Father will raise him again from the dead and vindicate him.

And even the psalmist of Psalm 22 in the end recognizes that God has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted and he has not hidden his face from him but has heard when he cried to him.

But here, on the cross, at this moment in time, Jesus is carrying our sin upon his shoulders. And so God, who is of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, must turn his face away from his Son.

He must unleash his righteous wrath toward sinners upon him. At the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus pleaded with his Father, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will but as you will. This is the Father's answer. It is not possible. It is necessary that Jesus drink this cup of death, the cup of God's wrath on behalf of sinners.

[27 : 29] It is the only way to save sinners like you and me. In Jesus' cry, we hear the anguish and that sense of abandonment that Jesus feels.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus addresses God exclusively as my God and not as my Father.

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, in all of his prayers, Jesus addresses God as my Father. But here, he cries out, my God, my God.

It's not that Jesus has lost faith. He still cries out, my God, but there's a sense of distance, forsakenness. And Matthew, more than all the other Gospel writers, hones in on this sense of God's forsakenness in Jesus' death.

There is no reassuring, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit as Luke 23, 46 records here in Matthew. There is no triumphant, it is finished as John 19, 30 records.

[28 : 45] In the Gospel of Matthew, we have a raw picture of the forsakenness that Jesus experienced. It's not that the eternal trinity is broken.

The Son of God never ceases to be the second person of the trinity. But Jesus really, truly died in his human nature and experienced God's wrath toward sinners and a sinner's alienation from God.

And we see clearly the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death in the way he takes Barabbas' place on the cross. Jesus, it says in verse 38, was crucified with two robbers.

The word robber is the same word that the Roman Jewish historian Josephus uses to refer to revolutionaries, insurrectionists. Presumably, then, these two were colleagues of Barabbas, the notorious prisoner and insurrectionist.

And the third cross was likely originally intended for him. When earlier in Matthew 27, the Roman governor offered amnesty to one Jewish prisoner as was customarily done during Passover, he offered two people to the Jews to choose from, Jesus and Barabbas.

[30 : 00] But the Jewish crowd, having been stirred up by the chief priests, asked for Barabbas instead. Even though Jesus had done nothing wrong. Barabbas is an Aramaic name that means son of the father.

And Jesus, the son of God, the father, literally takes the place of this son of the father so that he is saved. This is a picture of what Jesus is accomplishing on a global scale for all of his people.

God refers to his chosen people as his son throughout scripture. In order to save God's son, his people, God's only son, Jesus, takes our place on the cross.

And it's because of Jesus' death that God's wrath is satisfied. And it's because of Jesus' death that we can receive eternal life. And we see the dramatic effect of Jesus' death in verses 51 to 54.

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

[31 : 17] And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. The curtain of the temple, the imposing symbol of our separation from our holy God is torn in two.

It's not a loose seam here or a small rip there. It is torn away from top to bottom. Because Jesus was forsaken, that means we can now be accepted, reconciled to God.

And the earth is shaken and rocks are split so that tombs are broken open. And we see a preview here of Jesus' resurrection on Sunday. Many of God's faithful followers who had died were raised from the dead and they came out after Jesus' resurrection, it says.

The fact that they don't come out until after Jesus' resurrection shows that Jesus' resurrection is the first, the prototype of the resurrection of all his followers in the future. These saints were raised at this time where presumably, they presumably died again to await the final resurrection of the body in the end times.

But they nonetheless serve as a powerful symbol of the resurrecting power of Jesus. Jesus bridges the gap between sinful men and holy God. Jesus brings people from death to life.

[32 : 37] The sting of death is sin. But by paying the penalty for the sins of his people on the cross, Jesus removes the sting of death and thereby inflicts a fatal blow on death itself.

so that all of us who repent of our sins and put our trust in Jesus are promised eternal life and resurrection of our bodies in the future.

These cosmic events so clearly attest to Jesus' true identity that even the Roman centurion who was keeping watch over Jesus is filled with awe and says in verse 54, truly this was the Son of God.

God the Father, of course, had declared that this is his Son. Jesus had called God his Father and said he is the Son of God. His disciples even have recognized that Jesus is the Son of God but this is the first time that a Gentile acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God.

and after his resurrection this message of salvation will be proclaimed not only among the Jews but among all the nations. And this is the message that the Church of Christ has faithfully proclaimed for the last 2,000 years.

[33 : 55] And we have continued that tradition by declaring to you the good news of Jesus Christ this Good Friday. And now you have a choice before you will you live in denial of who Jesus is and what he has done as if none of this ever happened?

Or will you like the centurion acknowledge that truly Jesus was the Son of God?