



Good Friday Devotional

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NORTHBROOK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

Rev. Ryan Young

Of all of Jesus' final words, his quotation of Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" can be the most confounding. As part of the trinity Jesus could not have been separated by the Father...could he? This Jesus is far too vulnerable--far too human--for our comfort. What is happening here?

Perhaps Jesus was foreshadowing the sentiments that his disciples would have in the days following between his death and resurrection. Perhaps Jesus felt it was important to connect his suffering to Israel's history. Or perhaps Jesus of Nazareth, fully human and fully divine, experienced a wave of desperation and a depth of sadness in a moment that threatened to overcome him.

Whatever the reason, this prayer of Jesus' is a crucial gift to us. There are more times than I would like to admit that I feel I am drowning in the brokenness of the world. Far too often I am grieved by the greed, cruelty, and hatred by which humanity seems gripped. It is a gift to know that, even if for just a moment, Jesus seemed overwhelmed by the exact same things--and he gave us an example of how to respond to those moments:

Jesus prayed.

Jesus turned to God and called out God's seeming absence. Of course, God was not missing and this moment of desperation would not have the last word, but it gives us a model to follow in times when we feel overwhelmed.

We pray. We lament. We call out God's perceived absence. We draw our attention to God's perceived silence.

And then we listen. Hoping, beyond all rational hope, that the story is not over. Trusting that God will speak again.

Into your hands I commit my spirit.

Leslie Bowers

After Jesus cries out in his desperation to God, he turns to the Psalms. He turns to words that are familiar and comforting - to words he was probably taught as a child by his mother - a familiar bedtime prayer. "Into your hands I commit my spirit."

It's wonderful to me because this is exactly what I do when my emotions are too big to put into words - I turn to the familiar. I turn to the Psalms. I read them. I pray them. I sing them. I let them be the words my heart can't form.

And they bring me comfort. The comfort of hearing them from my mother and in the Sanctuaries of my past. The comfort of knowing thousands of years of people have been too overwhelmed to form their own prayers and turned to these words. The comfort of knowing that EVEN JESUS in his time of pain and suffering turned to these words of pure trust in God.

As he did his entire time on Earth, Jesus, in his last moments, shows us how to live. In the darkest moments when all hope feels lost, when the uncertainty, fear, exhaustion, and sorrow are the only things before his eyes, he puts his trust in God. Immediately following a desperate cry because he can't see God anywhere in this situation, he puts his trust in God.

And today, when our homes and the entire world that surrounds us are filled with uncertainty, fear, exhaustion, and sorrow, Jesus is quietly reminding us to put our trust in God. When you can see God's presence and when God seems desperately distant, put your trust in God. When your life is clearly ordered in God's footsteps or when it feels like it's spinning out of control, put your trust in God. When the world outside your door makes sense or when the world is so crazy you're surprised the sky isn't green, put your trust in God. Commit your spirit to God. Allow God to fill you with a peace that truly passes all understanding.

Into your hands I commit my spirit. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Amen.

Here is your son...Here is your mother

Connor King

The Johannine scholar, Alenn Culpepper, once wrote that “the gospel of John seeks to build a new community.” The thesis statement of this gospel, Culpepper says, can be seen in the prologue when the writer proclaims that, for those who believe in Jesus and receive him, God makes those believers God’s children. (John 1:12)

This background information about the purpose of this gospel sheds light on some of Jesus’s final words: “Woman, here is your son...Here is your mother.” (John 19:26-27) It must be noted, however obvious it might be to the reader, that Mary the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple are NOT biologically related. We cannot gloss over this albeit simple detail. In the moment of his glorification, as it is regarded in the context of this gospel, wherein Jesus is enacting the greatest expression of God’s love by giving his life for the world, Jesus is proclaiming a new bond of kinship. By claiming Mary to be the disciple’s mother and the disciple to be Mary’s son, Jesus is forming a new family of faith that is not defined by biological ancestry, but by belief in Christ as Lord and Savior.

Being now united in Christ as a new family, we are gifted a spirit of responsibility to love and serve our new family members. With the formation of this new community, Jesus is calling the disciple to care for his new mother just as the disciple would care for a biological parent. Likewise, at the cross, we are fully brought into God’s big family. As we look to Christ as our example, we will seek to look on our neighbors as brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers. With God’s help, we can grow in love and compassion so that we can better serve our family.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Jerome Young

Once more, Jesus is praying. But in this prayer, he's not praying for himself. He is interceding for others.

For whom was he praying?

He was praying for the Roman soldiers gambling for his clothing. The soldiers who had beaten, abused and humiliated him before nailing him to the cross.

He was praying for the Jewish leaders who, in their jealousy, accused Jesus of blasphemy and sentenced him to die.

He prayed this prayer for those in the crowds who stood by on the street casting insults as they passed by.

He offered forgiveness to them all.

He prayed it for you and for me. Because we are all sinners, we all played a part in putting Jesus to death.

The good news is that God is gracious. He will forgive us and give us new life through his Son.

Today you will be with me in paradise.

Lauren Wagner

There are two criminals with Jesus on the day of the crucifixion. The first says to Jesus, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us" (Luke 23:39). The second criminal pleads for Jesus' innocence. This criminal has accepted his punishment and asks that Jesus remember him after his death. Jesus responds, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

On that day the second criminal bore witness to Jesus in the midst of his imminent death. Jesus took on his sins, and they entered paradise together. Notice there is no delay. "Today" you will be with me in paradise. There was no reason for Jesus to foreshadow or allude to the cross like he does throughout the gospels. On that day Jesus took on all the sins of creation, not three days later when Jesus arose. He bridged the relationship between creation and creator.

But what is this paradise? Jesus brought the kingdom back to the people of God, and he brought relationship back to the people of God. Together on that day, the criminal and Jesus enter into "paradise" - the kingdom of God - and he gave all of creation the opportunity to be in paradise. We get to be in a loving relationship with the Lord, and when our time comes, we are able to enter the Kingdom of heaven and be with our Lord and savior.

What a gift it is to know that not tomorrow, not yesterday, but today and for the rest of our lives we have been saved and will be with Jesus in paradise. A criminal nailed to a cross admits his wrong doings and uses the limited time he had left to be a witness for Jesus. What a powerful and convicting moment for someone in the entry way of death pause to give acknowledgement to Jesus.

Today on this Good Friday we get to be in paradise with Jesus because of the sacrifice he has made for creation.

I thirst.

Chad Hunt

One of my favorite parts of worship in the United Methodist Church is the moment we all stand as believers and unite with Christians all over the world and recite the timeless creed of our beliefs. The Apostles' Creed holds within it some of the most profound theological foundations in Christianity: birth, death, and resurrection.

Interestingly, it seems rather quiet when it comes to the day-to-day life or for a lack of better words, the *humanity* of Jesus. Oftentimes, we forget that Jesus was also fully human just as we are. For me, Jesus was fully human and fully God, in that order. It was in His humanity that He revealed His divinity.

"I thirst." It's almost hard to believe that such a statement could be made by a man who was the human face of God. It's here that we see no better expression of humanity than when Jesus simply said that He was thirsty. It's a simple need that He had at the time, but it is sobering to consider. Jesus shared in our humanity: in our meaning, and in our purpose. He shared in our thirst for relationship. This was done so that we might have a direct path to Him in redemption and grace.

It also makes me think about the fact that with the current situation, there are people all over the world today that are thirsting...needing...longing...suffering. Today, we find ourselves stepping down from our self-centeredness and egos and facing our most basic needs as humans. May we use this time to quench some of these thirsts through prayer, meditation, studying, and reaching out to others.

It is finished.

Rev. Laurie Moeller

These three words “it is finished” put a stop to the suffering. This whole painful episode has come to an end. Jesus takes his last breath and we all take a collective sigh of relief for the end to the misery he has endured. These three words are the exhale after we have been holding our breath for so long just begging for this wretched image to end. And it does. It is over. All of it.

I have heard it said that these are the words of God declaring his plan has been completed - it is finished. Adam Hamilton references the Greek word *tetelestai* which is more of an exclamation like “voila, it is accomplished!”, which is hard to grasp when imagining a suffering man put to death.

We must take these words, “it is finished” as part of a larger story than the one being told just in the suffering. God’s plan is to defeat death and the grasp that worldly behavior, attitudes, and cruelty have on our lives. He took it all - every last bit of scorn and hatred. Now he can begin writing a new story for us, a story of rebirth and redemption. A story where sin and suffering do not have the power to write our story.

It is finished...and now a new story can begin.

Today we are in the pause, the intermission, the suspense of how it will all play out. Sit in that uncertainty and allow God to show you His power to define you and His creation on Easter morning.

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with

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