

CRIES FROM THE CROSS – A CRY OF SUBMISSION

Luke 23:44-47, Matthew 21:1-11

April 10, 2022

During this season of lent we have been listening to Jesus' "*Cries from the Cross.*" We have been coming to the foot of the cross so that we can not only experience the suffering of Jesus, but also hear Christ's last words that help us as followers to deal with the many issues in our lives. Life is not easy as we are challenged by marriage, family, and other relationship issues, and then there's health issues, political issues, and various society issues; so, we need to hear from our dying Saviour to help us to deal with these issues in a Christ-like manner. Jesus hung on the cross for six hours and during that time, with great effort, He uttered seven significant statements that help us to live as Christ followers.

We already looked at the first three hours that Jesus hung on the cross – when He first prayed for those that were mocking Him and crucifying Him, "***Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing***" (Luke 23:34), teaching us on how to forgive, especially our enemies. Then to the criminal who was being crucified alongside of Jesus, who asked: "***Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom,***" and Jesus promised him, "***Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise***" (Luke 23:42-43), reminding us to never give up on anyone no matter what, but continue to pray for the lost because even on their death bed they can be saved. And when Jesus turned His attention to His disciple John and His mother Mary standing at the foot of the cross, He spoke words of compassion first to His mother, "***Dear woman, here is your son***" (John 19:26), and then spoke to His disciple John, "***Here is your mother***" (John 19:27), assuring His mother that she would be taken care of for the rest of her life.

Then at noon – a supernatural darkness that could be felt covered the land until three in the afternoon, as God who is light, turned His eyes away from the cross everything went dark. In this moment as Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world as God's sacrificial Lamb, His heavenly Father for the first time in eternity God abandoned His Son. Jesus who is eternal and one with His heavenly Father – here on the cross, for the very first time felt forsaken by His Heavenly Father. God disowns Jesus, forsaking His loving relationship with His one and only Son, and Mark's Gospel doesn't hesitate to record Jesus' terrifying reaction for us, "***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***" as Jesus quoted David's words of anguish from **Psalm 22:1**, fulfilling one of the thirty-three prophecies that were fulfilled when Jesus hung on the cross, and the Jews standing around the cross

would have recognized this Psalm as Jesus was identifying Himself as the one that David was writing about. Psalm 22 is a remarkable portrayal of what Jesus endured through His suffering for us, the mocking, the piercing of His hands and feet, the dividing of the garments and the casting of lots. And then this Psalm ends with another quotation of Jesus on the cross, ***“It is finished!”***

Here in the darkness, as an innocent man nailed to a cross, Jesus has lost the love of His Father and is now completely forsaken and heartbroken. Whenever we read these words, we can’t possibly understand the deep anguish that Jesus was going through, because there is no way for us to understand the eternal love that existed between God the Father and God the Son. You will notice on the cross that Jesus never said anything about His physical suffering. Jesus didn’t complain: *“My head, My head,”* because of the thorns piercing His brow; or *“My hands, My hands, My feet, My feet,”* because of the nails piercing His hands and feet; physical suffering was not the issue here. Jesus’ problem wasn’t physical pain, it was relational and emotional pain – it was the pain of forsaken love, but Jesus knew what had to take place to release mankind for sin, death and defeat the devil.

When we read the words of the Old Testament prophet **Isaiah 53:4**, ***“Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer,”*** we can get the wrong idea that Jesus’ Father was angry, cruel, and harsh. However, such an idea distorts and paints the wrong picture of God who is LOVE; instead, what we need to realize is what was now taking place on the cross was planned before the creation and before even sin entered the world, because our all-knowing God knew we would be deceived by Satan and fall into sin; therefore, He needed to have a plan in place to defeat Satan and redeem us. God needed to do that in such a way that Satan would be caught off guard and fall into His trap by causing Jesus to suffer at the hands of men so that Satan would take the bait. Peter tells us how that was achieved – **1 Peter 1:18-20**, ***“It was not by perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world.”*** Satan took the bait and lost his authority over us, because of the shedding of innocent blood!

Here at the foot of the cross all of the forces of the universe meet in one place at the same time – as they all played a part in the death of Jesus. **Man** did his part by killing the Son of God, revealing the great darkness and evil that is within mankind’s heart; **Satan** did his part by orchestrating the whole thing, using us as

his puppets as we allow his to deceive us. As a result God cursed the serpent for deceiving Eve, ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel”*** (Genesis 3:15), and now at the cross Satan was displaying his foolish hostility towards God, fulfilling another prophesy and was destroyed as Christ crushed His head with one fatal blow. **Jesus** did His part by dying as ***“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*** (John 1:29), and finally **God** did His part by showing both His justice and love by pouring out His full wrath on His Son to pay the penalty of sin in full. So, to grasp what happened that day on the cross, we need to understand that in order for God to save us and bless us, He had no other choice but to turn His back upon Himself, which is the great mystery that fooled Satan, catching him off-guard, bringing about the devil’s downfall and our salvation by one act of love!

Then we have all prayed this prayer, ***“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*** at some time in our lives – when someone we dearly love dies, when we find ourselves facing a battle we never wanted to face, and the many other ways we might experience a sense of being forsaken by God, especially in times when God is noticeably silent and absent. However, because of these words from the cross, in those times we can pray to Jesus because He knows what we are experiencing and feeling. We can pray to the One who sympathises with us in that moment while at the same time, reminding us of what happened on Good Friday, ***“God didn’t forsake me, and God hasn’t forsaken you.”*** On the cross Jesus was forsaken by God for a short time so that we wouldn’t be forsaken. And I am thankful that my Lord and King understands fully and completely what it was like to feel hopelessness, doubt, and despair for a time. And as the feelings of abandonment and God-forsakenness, and death were not the end of Jesus’ story, neither will suffering and death be God’s final word for us!

As Jesus suffered those last three hours on the cross in darkness – He uttered three more phrases that shook the world. We will look at one of them today, one on Good Friday, and then the last one on Easter Sunday. The account we will look at today is from **Luke 23:44-47**, ***“It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, ‘Surely***

this was a righteous man.”” It was already noted earlier that in the hours in which Jesus became sin, His union was somehow broken with His heavenly Father, because a holy God cannot even look upon sin, so as the Father closed His eyes, the world went dark. Then, in the moments before Jesus died, His fellowship with God was restored, and once again Jesus was re-connected with His Heavenly Father. This time Jesus doesn’t use the impersonal address He used earlier when He said, **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”** Jesus now reverts back to the affectionate name He had always used for God in prayer, *“Abba or Daddy.”* I want you to think of Jesus’ last words as these, *“Daddy, my work here on earth is done; I’m coming home!”*

After hours of torment and suffering bearing our sins on the cross – now think of the great joy Jesus must have experienced as He is restored back to His eternal relationship with His heavenly Father and is welcomed back into Heaven.

Hebrews 12:2 describes this moment with these words, ***“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*** The great joy that Jesus experienced in those last moments on the cross was because He endured obediently and faithfully everything that the world, the devil, and mankind had thrown His way. There was joy because Jesus had succeeded in successfully carrying out the plan to save the world that He and His Father had put together since the beginning of time.

The Good News in all of this for us – is that the death penalty for sin has been paid in full and our adversary Satan has been defeated. So, let the devil roar at us all he wants, his teeth have been pulled out; the devil has no power or authority over us. And that is why, as Christ followers, we can live victorious lives no matter what happens; all we need to do is to fix our eyes on Jesus because He has accomplished the work God sent Him to do and is now sitting at the right hand of God as our defense against every accusation Satan brings against us. We can praise God and have joy in all of our circumstances because we have received full pardoned in the courts of Heaven, we are sealed for eternity!

The reuniting of the Father and the Son wasn’t the only thing that happened that Good Friday when Jesus died – Luke’s account tells us about another event that took place that day in **verse 45**, ***“And the curtain of the temple was torn in two,”*** and Mark’s account adds another important detail about how it was torn, ***“from top***

to bottom” (Mark 15:38). This curtain in the Temple was massive, it was 60 feet tall and 24 feet wide and as thick as a man’s hand. It hung from the ceiling of the Temple as a partition between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies where the High Priest was allowed to enter into God’s presence, only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The Holy of Holies was considered the throne room of God, and in ancient times, the Ark of the Covenant was kept inside. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest couldn’t come empty handed into this area of the Temple, he had to enter carrying the blood of a sacrificed perfect unblemished lamb to sprinkle on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, which is called the Mercy Seat, as the priest came to make amends with God for his own sins and the sins of the people. This curtain was necessary during Old Testament times in separating a holy God from every sinful person on the earth. When Jesus died, as the sinless chosen Lamb of God it was the Day of Atonement as Jesus entered the Holy of Holies with His precious blood, paying the price for our sins once-and-for all time with His shed blood; thereby abolishing the Old Testament sacrificial system for all time, establishing a new covenant!

It’s interesting that we are told that the curtain was torn from TOP to BOTTOM – with great effort men could possibly stand at the bottom and tear it but being torn from the top means that it was a supernatural act of God, only something God could do. It was God’s way of saying, *“Because of the shed blood of my Son on the cross, My chosen perfect Lamb of God, there is no more barrier between ME and you. There is no longer a curtain barrier, or a human High Priest required to stand before ME on your behalf.”* As the Bible says, ***“Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need”*** (Hebrews 4:16). On that Good Friday, God ripped the curtain of religious rituals away and said, now you are free to: ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”*** (Matthew 11:28-30). As well as **Hebrews 10:19-20**, ***“And now we are brothers and sisters in God’s family because of the blood of Jesus, and he welcomes us to come into the most holy sanctuary in the heavenly realm – boldly and without hesitation. For he has dedicated a new, life-giving way for us to approach God.”*** That new way is through Christ’s blood!

Jesus’ cry of submission from the cross – ***“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,”*** also indicates the power of God’s hands. It reminds us that the safest place on this earth is in the hands of almighty God. In contrast, Jesus found out that

being in the hands of wicked men is the most dangerous place on earth. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus agonized with what lay ahead of Him as He put Himself into the hands of wicked men like a sheep going to the slaughter. Jesus remained submissive and obedient to His heavenly Father as He accepted His fate as planned from the beginning of time. We have to remember through this whole ordeal that even though Jesus was completely submissive, He was always in complete control of His fate; allowing Himself to be arrested, mocked, tortured and crucified, as He said to His disciples, ***“The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”*** (Mark 14:41-42) Through the entire trial and crucifixion process Jesus was in control of His fate by allowing cruel men to have their way with Him to fulfill the will of His Father!

Jesus voluntarily gave Himself into the hands of sinners, by allowing wicked human hands to form a crown of thorns and press it into His brow; by allowing wicked human hands to shred His back with whips, to slap Him, to spit on Him, pull out His beard, and finally allowing wicked hands drive nails into His hands and feet. So, Jesus was in complete control when the soldiers came to arrest Him, as well as later, when Pilate thought he was in control. Telling Jesus, ***“Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”*** However, Jesus assured Pilate that he was mistaken, as Jesus answered him that God was in control, ***“You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above”*** (John 19:10-11). Through the entire process, only what the Father and the Son had already agreed upon would come to pass; therefore, Jesus was in the hands of God as well as in the hands of wicked men, because God would only permit so much abuse and cruelty, and no more to take place, because Jesus had to die on a cross not due to scourging or by any other means. That’s also why Jesus’ body could not be left on the cross to rot, or to be discarded on the trash heap as was the normal practice for crucified victims. It was to fulfill the words of King David in ***Psalm 16:9-10, “My body will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”*** To fulfill the scriptures, Jesus would be buried in a borrowed rich man’s tomb and will rise from the dead and not decay.

Jesus’ death was not an accident or random fate – but an appointment with divine destiny. Jesus remained as Master of Himself throughout the whole process. Death did not conquer Christ; instead, Christ conquered death, and He died

according to God's clock and according to God's timetable to fulfill Scripture. To fulfill the Scriptures, Jesus was crucified on the exact day and at the exact time that the Passover lambs were being killed in the Temple for the sins of the people. At exactly 3:00 pm on that Good Friday afternoon as the Shofar was being blown to end the sacrifices, Jesus cried out His last words and died, fulfilling His role as ***"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"*** (John 1:29). And then at death, Jesus was released from the hands of cruel men and was now placing Himself back in the safe comforting HANDS of His heavenly Father, entrusting His loving Dad with His spirit.

As a twelve year old boy in the Temple – the first recorded words of Jesus by Luke were, ***"Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about My Fathers' business"*** (Luke 2:49)? And now that His Father's business is finished, Jesus' last words recorded by Luke would be, ***"Father, into your hands I commit My spirit"*** (Luke 23:46). So, from beginning to end of His earthly life Jesus was submissive to His Heavenly Father – God's Son cared only about one thing: doing His Father's will obediently and finishing the work that He was sent to do. Now, on the cross, at 3:00 pm that Good Friday afternoon, nothing was left undone. Jesus had fulfilled everyone of the Old Testament Scriptures that pointed to His coming, His ministry, and His sacrificial death; thereby, Christ's reward was to sit at His Father's right hand. Because of His faithful obedience, Jesus has been elevated to a position of authority and today continues to wait for His enemies to become a footstool for His feet – ***"The LORD says to my lord; 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'"*** (Psalm 110:1).

Likewise, if we are safe in the hands of God the Father – we are also safe in the hands of God the Son. Earlier in His ministry Jesus said this to His disciples, ***"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."*** (John 10:27-30). How comforting is it for us to know that we are held and embraced by both the hands of the Father and the hands of the Son. This cry of submission from the cross is a victorious shout from Christ to us, declaring death is now powerless over those that love and serve God the Son, so that no one or no thing can snatch us out of their hands, when we are submissive to our Heavenly Father!

However, there is also a warning for us here in – **Hebrews 10:31**, ***“It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*** This verse tells us that if your spirit doesn’t go into the hands of God for safekeeping, it will go into the hands of God for judgement. So, the very same hands that give us comfort and hope, can also bring us terror and punishment, depending on what we have done with Jesus. The Good News for us today is that God’s hands are still outstretched towards us, inviting everyone to come and receive His mercy and grace, but one day those hands will no longer invite us, but will bring justice on this world. The Bible is very clear that all those who don’t receive and come under the protection of Christ’s righteousness will be separated from Him. That explains why Jesus pleads with us, ***“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”*** (Matthew 7:13-14). The cross points us to that narrow gate through which we can enter into for safekeeping when the day of Judgment comes!

Finally, the suffering of Christ on the cross shows us that God never promised that every believer will experience a calm and painless passageway through death. What Jesus does promise us is a safe landing on the other side. So, the promise is that no matter how violent or horrific death may be from cancer, an accident, abuse, or persecution, we will arrive safely at our eternal destination. Our spirit will be preserved even though our body is destroyed. Thanks to the Resurrection, we have the sure knowledge that the spirit survives the physical body, and thanks to the Resurrection our destroyed and decayed bodies shall one day be raised and restored to newness of life. When we come to foot of the cross and embraced the cross, God’s promise is that we shall never really die, for Jesus died not merely to take away our sins but proved that death does not have the last word for those who put their faith in Christ!

When the time comes for our family to gather around us one last time – let me ask you this, ***“What will be your final words?”*** As believers, we all want to die well as a witness of our faith to those we are leaving behind, and on the cross, Jesus has showed us how to die well. On the cross Jesus left us the legacy of a ***“good death.”*** We all have a soul and spirit that makes fellowship with God possible, and at death our spirit will depart somewhere, either to the light of eternal day, or to the darkness of eternal night. The Good News for us as believers is that we can die with confidence of eternal life when we put our faith in Christ. Interestingly, none

of the Gospel writers simply said that Jesus died on the cross; instead, they all said that His spirit went into the hands of God. The Gospel writers want us to understand that Jesus' death was not the end but the beginning of a new eternal relationship. This is the image that the writer of Hebrews portrays, who views Jesus as the One who has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us, which means: ***“We have this certain hope like a strong, unbreakable anchor holding our souls to God himself. Our anchor of hope is fastened to the mercy seat in the heavenly realm beyond the sacred threshold, where Jesus our forerunner, has gone in before us”*** (Hebrews 6:19-20). Jesus is our High Priest who has gone on ahead of us, and one day will usher us into the presence of God, taking us behind the curtain that was torn in two from top-to-bottom, by His precious blood.

While none of us knows how and when we are going to die – we can choose the words we want to say, ahead of time. Right now, we can preplan our final words, and I don't think we can ever find any better words than those eight final words from the cross, ***“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”*** Or we can make it even more personal, ***“Daddy, my work here on earth is done; I'm coming home!”*** This was Jesus' dying prayer and it can be our dying prayer as well, an absolute prayer of total submission and trust in God!