

Famous Last Words: Abandonment

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[0 : 00] So good morning, Braemar Baptist. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my privilege to be lead pastor here. This morning we're going to continue in our series called Famous Last Words as we focus on the last words or phrases that Jesus said from the cross as recorded in the Bible.

And as I've said before, these are powerful words, both because of who said them and all that he means to us, but also because of where he said them from, which is the cross.

Last week, you may remember, we looked at the third phrase of Jesus from the cross found in John 19, 26 and 27, where we read when Jesus saw his mother there and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, woman, here is your son. And to the disciple, here is your mother. We recognize in that phrase that the son of God, who is fulfilling his ultimate destiny, was also taking time to tend to his mortal responsibilities.

And it's in this phrase of Jesus that we see the importance of relationship modeled for us in his words and actions and in the ultimate act of God.

[1 : 19] We recognize that God through Jesus would experience the depth of pain and loss and broken relationship that happened on that day at Golgotha.

And through that sacrificial act, our relationship with God would be restored. And so this morning we'll be focusing on the concept of abandonment.

As we reflect on the fourth phrase of Jesus from the cross that is recorded in both the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, as Peter read for us this morning.

Turn with me in your Bibles or refer to the screen as we read the words of Matthew 27, 45 and 46 again. And so I did a little bit of research. Now, the words that Jesus spoke here, this is not, Aramaic is not an existing language anymore.

So I don't know about you, but the way I gave Peter some direction to pronounce it, I'll pronounce it again. Again, this is what I found to be what theologians and historians think that that phrase in Scripture would have sounded like.

[2 : 36] And so for you, hearing Peter say it, and when you hear me say it, you'll think that's not how I've always pronounced it. But that's interesting because it wasn't how I pronounced it either.

But again, Aramaic is no longer an existing language. So linguists have said this is the best approximation they can come up with. So from noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the land.

About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Elohi, Elohi, lemah shavaktani. Which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The account in Mark 15 varies only slightly, as Peter mentioned. And the reference to three hours of darkness and the words of Jesus are exactly the same.

Have you ever wondered why the Gospels translated from the original Greek into English and other languages suddenly have that direct Aramaic quote of Jesus without an English translation there?

[3 : 46] So there's that English translation. But why would it be that Aramaic was quoted directly when it was translated? So in my research, it seems to stem from the fact that there's no other way to translate the Aramaic words directly into Greek.

So the original translations of Scripture, to translate the words of Jesus in Aramaic into Greek was not possible to do it directly. So when they recorded the words of Jesus, they kept them as they were.

Because they didn't have the linguistic tools at that time to translate it accurately, and they wanted it correct. So that when the Greek was translated into English versions that we have today and other languages, that translation, that original Aramaic with the English translation afterwards, was kept intact from the original manuscripts.

So, now you know. We've talked previously in this series about the fact that gathering these phrases of Jesus together involves looking at all of the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion. But this phrase of Jesus is recorded in both Matthew and Mark. So you may be asking, why is that? Some scholars suggest that the Gospel of Mark, this may blow your mind, you may have heard it before, it's okay.

[5 : 16] Some scholars suggest that the Gospel of Mark was actually written first, and that it was then used as a source by the authors who wrote Matthew and Luke.

So you may have also heard the term synoptic Gospels used to refer to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. That's because when looked at together, the word synopsis sounds familiar, they have a lot of similarities.

They reflect some of the same stories of Jesus' ministry and his teachings. And in fact, it's commonly estimated that 90% of the material found in Mark is also found in Matthew.

Nine out of ten verses in Mark are paralleled in Matthew, which seems to suggest, I think, some common source material. So this is where we get the scholarly view that Mark was written first. And if you're familiar with the Gospels, you've also likely noted to yourself that John includes different sayings and stories of Jesus.

[6 : 24] So suffice it to say that there are many, many theories as to which Gospel was written first, which Gospels may have been used as sources for others. It was exhausting in seminary to cover all of these possible theories.

But I don't want to confuse you with any of this. So just rest in the ultimate conclusion that God was at work in this whole process and that the Bible that we have today is the Word of God for us always as He intended it to be.

And for me personally, knowing that there's a harmony and consistency across those Gospel accounts brings an even stronger argument for them being true historical fact.

And as we've seen, there's an almost word-for-word match on the fourth phrase of Jesus in the accounts of Matthew and Mark. I also found it interesting to note that this phrase are the only words of Jesus from the cross that are directly quoted in Matthew or Mark.

It's interesting to note. In Luke's account, the starkness of this specific moment is also softened somewhat, for whatever reason, as he doesn't actually quote the words of Jesus in the moment.

[7 : 50] Luke does, however, recount that Jesus let out a loud cry, which, knowing the complementary nature of the Gospel accounts, could be referring, quite likely, to the words of Jesus quoted in Matthew and Mark.

And as we'll reflect in future weeks, John's account seems somewhat more peaceful, almost, or even tranquil. And the ending strikes quite a different note.

But the words of Jesus here reflect so many different things to us, don't they? A sense of despair, of being alone, forgotten, left behind, unwanted.

Our sermon this morning is titled Abandonment, as that really is the best way to capture all those emotions into one. The concept of abandonment is really quite complex.

It can involve a literal, physical abandonment, someone being left behind or discarded. But it can also involve a significant emotional aspect as well.

[9 : 09] For someone who feels emotionally abandoned, they may be left feeling undesirable, unwanted, insecure, or cut off from a source of support or provision.

Abandonment is a deeply impactful experience on so many levels that can leave significant relational and emotional scars. Someone who's been put up for adoption, particularly if they were old enough to remember it, may feel a sense of rejection by the person you felt loved you more than anyone else.

Abandonment. When someone's spouse leaves them for someone else, there may be a fundamental sense of feeling unworthy, unloved, devalued, abandonment.

We're talking about a deeply human emotion to which I believe all of us can relate in some way. Have you ever had your heart broken by someone you deeply loved?

Have you ever had your trust painfully broken by someone who betrayed you? You likely have.

[10 : 32] And in that, you've experienced some sense of abandonment. For Jesus on the cross that day, he was expressing a sense of abandonment.

And it can be challenging for us to wrap our heads around that concept, I think. As I was studying, it crossed my mind, have you ever thought, but Jesus is God.

If it was God's plan for Jesus to go to the cross, and he knew that was part of the ultimate plan, then don't the words of this phrase seem odd somehow?

If Jesus knew the Father loved him and us, why did he react with such painful and clearly human response to the inevitability of the cross at this point?

In saying these words, Jesus is actually quoting Psalm 22 here. And he's declaring his ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy in both its agony and its exaltation.

[11:48] We read in Psalm 22, verses 1 and 2, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?

My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer. By night, but I find no rest.

As I reflected on our passage this week, I was also struck by something else in these words. Even as Jesus speaks the words of Psalm 22, the one who consistently referred to God as his Father, my Father, the Father, in his teaching, in his preaching, in his prayers, referred to God as having forsaken him.

and he cried out to God. The Son of God was relating to and connecting with the creator of the universe with whom he had an intimate and familial relationship with a sense of human distance and perspective.

Theologians have commented that this phrase of Jesus conveys the reality of his humanity in that moment. He had been betrayed and abandoned by his friends, aside from the small gathering of people who were there for him that day.

[13:28] Everyone else was gone. Of the thousands of people who had heard him preach during his ministry and who had been personally impacted by his friendship, his message, and his love.

When he had been present for so many others in so many ways, very few people were present for him that day.

But as we continue to reflect on that, we also see that the connection remains. As for Jesus, this is still my God to whom he cries out.

Knowing that the words of Psalm 22 seem to have been on Jesus' mind and heart at this point on the cross, I believe it's helpful for us to reflect on the fact that Psalm 22 does not end at this point of abandonment.

It does not leave us at this place of desolation and despair. As we read in Psalm 22, verse 24, For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one.

[14:49] He has not hidden his face from him, but has listened to his cry for help. There's a sense here that God has not turned his face away from his son.

Nor is God in any way blind to what is taking place here. And in Psalm 22, verses 30 and 31, this message comes forward even more.

Posterity will serve him. Future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring it to people yet unborn.

That's powerful. Declaring it to people yet unborn because he has done it. For us, more than 2,000 years removed from Calvary, we know that a great victory was achieved that day.

And we'll reflect on and celebrate that together as we continue in our series. But for now, we rest in the deep sense of abandonment that is on display in this moment.

[16:08] Even in this hour, oops, what happened? It's not working. Let's pretend then. Even in the hour, it's not working.

It's not working. No one said it's not working. Okay, we'll just stay with that image. even in the hour of darkness and death, God was at work.

There it is. Thanks, Kevin. God was at work here. God was present. But that really wasn't evident at that time, was it?

Again, we have the perspective beyond the cross, beyond the resurrection, resurrection. But not then. Evangelists and theologians generally stay away from hypothesizing about what Jesus was thinking or feeling at this moment.

Because we really don't know. And we can't, we dare not assume. The gospel accounts of this day, particularly Matthew and Mark, are very disciplined, very structured, very factual, almost minimalistic in their accounts.

[17:31] They don't wander into the realm of speculation or fiction. And I believe that's likely a good thing. We're often used to being spoon-fed details and information, aren't we?

especially in today's world. If you can Google something, why would you use your brain? Ouch.

But in this account, in this phrase, we are left to reflect. We are just left here. We're left to reflect and seek God's guidance on how he is at work in us through these words.

Did Jesus, at the moment he cried out, really think that God had abandoned him? If we answer yes to that question, wouldn't we seem to be denying his divinity?

How can the one who is true God and true man, even as he is dying, be abandoned by God? The very idea would seem to split apart the two natures of the one who is Jesus Christ.

[18:52] And these are the kinds of questions that tangle our minds as we enter into this moment on the cross. I believe we may seek to find the answer, the solution, salvation.

But my friends, there is mystery here. And I would suggest, I would declare, there's also victory here.

We also experience one of the great mysteries of our faith as we celebrate communion. It's through communion that we reflect both individually and as a community on the sacrifice that we've been talking about this morning.

And as we celebrate communion together this morning, we approach this table together, not as a Braemar Baptist church table, but as the Lord's table to which he calls us to freely come.

Let's take a moment of quiet reflection before we come to the table together this morning. forward
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