Matthew Ch27v45-54 - Sayings On The Cross 3 - Forsaken

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 July 2023

Preacher: Martin Parker

[0:00] And we're going to be reading from verses 45 to 54, and the words are up on the screen as well, so you can follow along there or in your Bibles, whichever you prefer.

But I'm going to read Matthew 27, starting in verse 45. From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over all the lands.
About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lemma sabachthani, which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
When some of those standing there heard this, they said, he's calling Elijah. Immediately, one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff and offered it to Jesus to drink.
The rest said, now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him. And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.
[1:10] At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split, and the tombs broke open.

The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.
When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, surely he was the son of God.
Martin, thank you. Thanks very much.
Alex, it's lovely to be back with you again. On a few other occasions, we've looked at some of these sayings of the Lord Jesus on the cross, and we're going to look at the other one that was mentioned from Psalm 22 this morning.
[2:15] We'll really just focus in on those words of Jesus, but obviously they come within the context of what's happening around it, and hopefully we'll look at those verses to help us make sense of what Jesus says here on the cross.

But let's pray before we look at this together. Father, we pray now that you might help us to grasp the truths of which we read, that we might grasp the very depths of suffering that Jesus experienced for us, so that we might never have to.
And so, Father, we pray that even as we think this morning of what it means to be forsaken by you, that we might both grasp what Jesus has done for us, and rejoice then in what is ours because of all that he has done.
And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The very word forsaken is one of the most tragic in all of human speech.
That's what Arthur Pink writes before he lists a few examples. A man forsaken by his friends, a wife forsaken by her husband, a child forsaken by its parents.
[3:35] Perhaps you've known what it's like to be forsaken. The word forsaken is one of the most tragic of all of human speech.

Yet it's the word that Jesus uses here. Forsaken. It's only in the last couple of years that I finally got around to reading Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.
When I say reading, I really mean listening. I was too lazy to read the book. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I found it to be an incredibly moving story in which I was filled with pity for Frankenstein's monster.
Victor Frankenstein is obsessed with creating life, and he eventually succeeds in making a creature that not only breathes and moves, but thinks and feels.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

But the creature's form is hideous, and his stature is frightening. Frankenstein is repulsed at the creature he's brought into being, and he abandons him.
[4:47] The story is really one of being forsaken. At one point, the monster cries out to his creator, I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed.

We finally sense the anguish of the monster. He cannot understand why he's being treated as he is. Rather than being loved by his creator, the creature has been abandoned and forsaken.
He's treated more like Satan, driven from God's presence, than Adam, who was created to enjoy God's company. And now his physical attributes mean that no one else will ever accept him.
He's both hideous and frightening. If his creator cannot love him, who will? He is alone, abandoned, forsaken.
Now when we think of that sense of abandonment, whether it's a creature forsaken by its creator, a wife forsaken by her husband, a child forsaken by parents, or a person forsaken by friends, it's incredible then to contemplate that Jesus experiences what it means to be forsaken at the cross.
[6:24] not just by his many followers, or even by his closest friends, but by his father in heaven.

Because here we see a man forsaken by God. Now I've chosen those words really carefully. A man forsaken by God.
Maybe you've heard statements before about how the eternal relationship between God the Son and God the Father is broken during these three hours upon the cross, as though somehow there has been a change in the eternal being of God.
But God is unchangeable in his being. The trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cannot be broken, even for a second, or else God himself would cease to be God.
But this is the very reason why the eternal Son of God took on human flesh. So that as a man, he might experience what it would be impossible for God to experience.
[7:40] Things like hunger, tiredness, suffering, pain, death, even being forsaken by God. These things are true of the humanity of Jesus, not of his divine nature.

But for all of his life here upon earth, Jesus has enjoyed unbroken fellowship with his heavenly Father. This is something that no other human being has ever enjoyed.
Jesus enjoys this unbroken fellowship because he enters the world without sin, and he lives in this world without sin.
There's absolutely nothing to hinder his relationship with God. He alone enjoys what should have been the experience of every human being.
what we all would have enjoyed except for mankind's rebellion against his Creator. And we see evidence of this unbroken fellowship throughout Jesus' life on earth.
[8:51] Even as a young boy, you remember that Jesus disappears to the temple, telling his earthly parents that he must be about his Father's business. Jesus says what his Father wants him to say.

He has come to do the Father's works. At times, Jesus pulls away from the crowds to be alone and to have more intimate times to talk to his Father in prayer.
But he lives all of his life conscious of the Father's presence. And yet now, as he hangs upon the cross, this unbroken fellowship with God, which he has enjoyed for every second of every minute, of every hour, of every day, for his 33 years here upon earth, comes to a sudden end.
And he cries out, My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me? He is a man forsaken by God.
And this forsakenness is evidenced in a couple of ways. Matthew, first of all, describes the darkness of divine judgment. It's a strange phenomenon, isn't it?
[10:19] In verse 45, from about noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the land. It must have been a sight that no one living at the time would ever forget.

Perhaps you can remember, at least I remember, especially in my childhood, times when the electricity went off at home and we had to rummage around before we had torches on our phones to find the candles in the drawers and the matches and light them up and work out how we were going to survive without light in the house for however many hours the electricity would be off.
Such events are memorable enough. But this, this is darkness in the middle of the day. This is darkness when the sun is supposed to be at its brightest.
From about noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the land. Now of course there'll be many people and you've probably heard people try to put this event in the category of a natural event.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

It was just a solar eclipse and it was just a coincidence that this occurs at the time that Jesus is on the cross. Now I'm no scientist or astrologist but like the rest of you I have the ability to Google what is the longest possible solar eclipse and if you're to do that you'll find that the answer is about seven and a half minutes.
[11:48] So whatever this is it's not a natural solar eclipse. What happens here is a supernatural event. The question is what are we to make of it?

Well it might immediately conjure up in your mind a similar event that lasted not just for three hours but for three whole days. There have already been eight plagues sent upon the land of Egypt because Pharaoh refused to let God's people go.
Each plague seems to grow in intensity and severity. And after the plague of darkness Pharaoh tells Moses never to come before him again and Moses assures Pharaoh that he will never see Moses' face again.
You see this darkness that fell upon Egypt was the darkness of divine judgment. The plague of darkness was followed only by the death of Egypt's firstborn sons.
Egypt would face the judgment of God from which it would never fully recover. Pharaoh had ignored God's commands, resisted God's purposes and spurned God's mercy and all that remained was the darkness of divine judgment.
[13:17] Now here at the cross for three hours between noon and three o'clock darkness came over the land and just as in Egypt it was the darkness of divine judgment.

Just as Moses had withdrawn from Pharaoh now it seems that God himself withdraws from Jesus. And just as divine judgment fell upon the firstborn sons of Egypt now the judgment of God falls on his own son.
Not just the judgment of God for the sins of one nation but the judgment of God for the sins of all nations. The judgment of God for all those who had ignored God's commands resisted God's purposes and spurned God's mercy.
The judgment of God for the sins of the whole world rested upon Jesus. This strange darkness that covers the land is nothing less than the darkness of divine judgment.
It's no surprise then is it that whenever Jesus would talk about the eternal judgment of hell that will come upon those who reject Jesus he would describe it in terms of complete darkness.
[14:43] Outer darkness. This kind of darkness the darkness of divine judgment the darkness of hell itself is what Jesus experiences at the cross.

Because you not only see the darkness of divine judgment but the despair of divine absence. Jesus cries out in a loud voice my God my God why have you forsaken me?
This strange darkness could have been God's judgment on the whole land of Israel for their rejection of their Messiah. That would be understandable wouldn't it? But no we see that God's judgment is far more specific than that.
God's judgment is not falling on the whole land of Israel not even the whole world it is falling upon one person Jesus because as the darkness of divine judgment falls on the land Jesus experiences the despair of divine absence.
David had once wrote I was young and now I am old yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken. But isn't that exactly what we see on the cross?
[16:13] there was no one more righteous than Jesus. No one could be more righteous than Jesus. He had perfectly obeyed the commands of God and completely fulfilled the purposes of God.

No one was more righteous than Jesus and no one could be more righteous than Jesus yet here he is forsaken by God experiencing the despair of divine absence.
Again Arthur Pink comments the hiding of God's face from him was the most bitter ingredient of that cup which the father had given the redeemer to drink.
This is what caused the torment in the garden of Eden or Gethsemane. In number six there's a blessing I'm sure you know the Aaronic blessing to Aaron and his sons where the people of God say the Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. There could be no greater blessing. The Lord turning his face towards you.
[17:32] The Lord shining his glory upon you. The Lord granting you grace and peace. But here Jesus experiences the very opposite.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

The Lord turning his face away from him. The light of God's countenance being removed from him. The judgment of God falling upon him.
Do we begin to grasp the horror of what is actually happening here at the cross? Jesus, the only truly righteous person who has ever lived, is forsaken by God, enduring the darkness of divine judgment and experiencing the despair of divine absence.
grace. But Jesus is not only forsaken by God, he is forsaken for us. Jesus wasn't the one who should have experienced the darkness of divine judgment.
We should. Jesus wasn't the one who should be forsaken by God. We should. And it's impossible to make any sense of what Jesus experiences here at the cross unless we understand that Jesus was not only forsaken by God, but that he was forsaken for us.
[19:11] You see, Jesus was forsaken so that he might open the way into God's presence. Those three hours of darkness were not the end of the strange events of this day.

Look at verse 51. At that moment, that is the moment of Jesus' death, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. It was the curtain in the temple that divided the holy place from the most holy place.
It was the curtain that separated the area in which the priests worked and the area into which not even a priest was allowed to set his foot. It was the curtain that separated the sinful people from the presence of a holy God.
Apparently, it was about ten centimetres thick. It was as good as a wall that had a sign placed on it saying in bold letters, no entry. But at the very moment that Jesus dies, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.
The fact that it's torn from top to bottom indicates that this wasn't something that people could do, but it was the action of God. And it was completely torn from top to bottom, removing any hindrance to enter the most holy place.
[20:35] Now, looking around, I know some of you are old enough to remember the dramatic scenes in November 1989 when the Berlin Wall was pulled down. I won't hazard to guess that any of you remember when it was first put up.

For 28 years, it seemed like an impenetrable divide between East and West Germany. And if you can remember the news at that time, we watched the wall crumble in ours.
The wall that had separated people from one another simply was removed within ours. The wall that for so long had said no entry all of a sudden had a hole in it that invited people to come through.
in the temple. Now in just seconds, the same thing happens in the Jerusalem temple. The curtain that had stood as a barrier for hundreds of years was torn in two from top to bottom and the way was opened into the presence of God.
those who once wouldn't have dared to enter the presence of God could now do so freely because the sin that kept us out, the sin that meant we should be forsaken by God had been taken by Jesus and he was forsaken for us.
[22:07] He experienced God's absence so that you and I might be able to enjoy God's presence. But that's not all.

Jesus was forsaken so that he might secure eternal life for his people. If the tearing of the temple curtain was a dramatic symbol of the way being opened into God's presence, well it seems like it was only the warm-up act for what happens next.
What happens next is far stranger than darkness in the middle of the day or an impenetrable barrier being torn in two. Dead people come to life.
Look at verses 51 to 53. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split, and the tombs broke open.
The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life, they came out of their tombs after Jesus' resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.
[23:12] How incredible is that? At the moment that Jesus dies, the dead bodies of some of God's people were brought back to life, just as Lazarus had been brought back to life, except these had probably been dead for much longer than the few days that Lazarus had laying in his tomb.

It seemed as though they only managed to get out of their tombs and make their way to Jerusalem in time to hear the news that Jesus had risen from the dead. They were able to say, we too have been brought back to life.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

It happened when the ground shook a couple of days ago. What, others must have asked, that was when Jesus died. This really strange event bears witness to what Jesus will one day do in the future.
He has secured eternal life for all of his people, and when he comes again, he will raise even our dead bodies from the ground to enjoy the life we were always intended to enjoy.
These two incredible events, the turning of the curtain and the raising of the dead to life, demonstrate that Jesus has both defeated sin and conquered death.
[24:34] You see, it is only sin that keeps us from the presence of God. It is only sin that condemns us to death. But upon the cross, Jesus takes the sin of the world upon himself.

As a result, he is kept from the presence of God. He is condemned to death. He is forsaken by God, and he is forsaken for us.
And because he was forsaken, we do not have to be. We can know our sins forgiven. We can have access to the presence of God.
We can have the certainty of eternal life. And we can die with confidence that our bodies will not be left in the grave because Jesus took our sins to the grave, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, from where he will come to raise us even from the ground to enjoy the life that he has purchased for all who are trusting in him.
Let's pray together. Father, we pray this morning that you might help us to grasp something of what Jesus experienced on the cross.
[26:03] And that as we do, we might grasp that that is what we have been saved from. Not because of anything in us, but because Jesus was forsaken for us.

Oh, Father, may that stir our hearts with love and gratitude and thankfulness towards you that reorient us to direct us towards you to want to live a life that pleases and honours you because we are confident that our sins are forgiven, that eternal life is secure, and that we too in this life can enjoy fellowship with our Father in heaven.
We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host