

Good Friday Meditation

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[0 : 00] If you would open up your Bibles to Mark chapter 15, I'll be preaching from verses 33-39 and I'll read those in just a second.

! But leading up to this moment, Jesus has been betrayed. Jesus has been abandoned. His disciples abandoned Him. In fact, in Mark 14, Jesus tells them that they would abandon Him. Peter denies Him three times. And then on 9 a.m. on that Good Friday, after being mocked, He was brought out to Golgotha and He was nailed to a cross.

And then there was these passerbys. And they said this, wagging their heads and saying, Aha, you who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross.

[1 : 20] So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked Him to one another, saying, He saved others. He cannot save Himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.

Those who were crucified with Him also reviled Him. Now, which brings us to 33 through 39.

Hear God's Word. And when the sixth hour had come, that's noon, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 3 p.m. And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, leme sednachthani.

Which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And some of the bystanders hearing it said, Behold, He's calling Elijah. And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down. And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion who was facing Him saw that in this way He breathed His last, He said, Truly, this man was the Son of God.

[2 : 51] Multiple times leading up to Jesus' last breath, we have people saying, If only He would come down. If only He would come down from the cross.

What if Jesus had come down from the cross? What if Jesus said from the cross, Enough is enough. You all don't get to kill me.

It's time to show you who's boss, and then He calls down legions of angels. That would be quite a different end of this story.

It would be quite a show of force, wouldn't it? This Good Friday service wouldn't be so much of a service with hints of sadness and hints of sobriety, but it would be a Good Friday service where we would celebrate the power.

But He didn't come down from the cross. Why not? Verses 33 through 39 record the historic account of Jesus' last moments.

[4 : 15] It's leading up to His death. It records His very last breath. He stayed on the cross until He breathed His last.

And Mark, who wrote this gospel, shows us why. Tonight I'm going to walk you through this account, and what I want to help you to see is why Jesus stayed on the cross.

Jesus' death accomplished something unexpected, and Jesus' death revealed someone extraordinary. So let me walk you through this account, account starting with this darkness.

In verse 33, And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. This was an untimely and all-encompassing darkness.

Now what makes it even more odd is that this darkness rolled in at high noon, where the sun would have been at its peak, it would have been the brightest time of day, so this is unusual, and it's ominous.

[5 : 27] Untimely, all-encompassing darkness. We know what this is like. Summertime in southeastern Wisconsin, July 3 or 4 p.m., and a big old thunderstorm starts rolling in.

You know what it's like. It's been bright and sunny all day, and then it gets dark, and things get a little ominous, and you start wondering where your kids are. It's time to come in, kids. Because we all know, when a thunderstorm rolls in, that there is something bigger and far more powerful than any human being on the planet.

And it's making its presence known. This untimely and all-encompassing darkness that occurred here at the sixth hour was not a thunderstorm rolling in, but something bigger and more powerful than that.

But the thing is, we're not told what it is. But what I just want you to see, it is connected to this man who has been nailed to the cross.

Which brings us to verse 34. This man on the cross cries out in this darkness. This darkness has enveloped the land.

[6 : 55] It's enveloped Jesus on the cross. And then he cries out, Eloi, Eloi, lame sebechtani. He's quoting from Psalm 22, verse 1.

And Mark keeps Jesus' words in the original Aramaic for emphasis. He translates it, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And so what we have here is Jesus quoting from a Psalm of David, one of Israel's greatest kings. And this quote is actually explaining what is happening.

The darkness is the visible manifestation of God his Father forsaking him. If you're familiar with the start of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is baptized, and that is baptism.

The heavens open up, and God the Father speaks. He says, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. So why is he forsaking his Son now?

[8 : 18] Why is God the Father, who is pleased with his Son at his baptism, forsaking Jesus, God the Son, here?

Jesus had already experienced a variety of different kinds of forsakenness, of forsakenness, betrayed by Judas, abandoned by his disciples, denied by Peter, and now God the Father? Forsaking him, abandoning him, deserting him? What did Jesus do to deserve that? I hope in your mind you're saying he didn't do anything.

Jesus is the only human, fully God, fully human, to live on this planet without ever sinning. Jesus did nothing. He did nothing to deserve this dark God-forsakenness.

You know who did deserve it? We deserve that. For all of our sin, God's just wrath.

[9 : 30] You see, this darkness is not just abandonment. It's God's just punishment for all of our sin poured out in full on Jesus.

That's what this darkness is. And it's unexpected. If you heard that Jesus, if you were in Jerusalem that day and you heard that Jesus was being crucified and you wanted to see a spectacle, you'd go and see it, but you were not expecting this darkness.

You were not expecting this cry of forsakenness. This cry in the darkness is an explanation of what this darkness is.

But there are some bystanders watching this and they hear Jesus cry out, Eloi, Eloi, and they think he's saying Elijah. Elijah. They think he's saying something else.

And so in verses 35 and 36, we have this spectacle. These bystanders in verses 35 and 36, they're onlookers.

[10 : 51] They see this crucifixion as a kind of event, as a kind of a spectacle to come and watch. And maybe something interesting is going to happen. And so this Eloi, Eloi, Lame, Sebechtani, they hear Elijah.

Elijah was an Old Testament prophet and he was the one who was taken up alive by a chariot of fire into heaven and the Jews of the time expected him to come back. So one of the bystanders who hears Jesus, thinks he hears Jesus crying for Elijah, he goes and grabs something for him to drink and he says, he's saying, wait!

Let us see whether Elijah will come take him down or not! He's not there to see Jesus. He's hoping for a show. Now, if Elijah comes and takes Jesus down, delivers him from the cross, boy, that would say a lot about Jesus with these folks.

And he's got some connections. He's connected to Elijah. If Jesus was delivered by Elijah, man, that makes Jesus into someone special.

But Elijah doesn't come. And if you were there looking for this spectacle, what happens next would have been very disappointing.

[12:26] Because what happens next in verse 37 is that Jesus breathes his last. His last breath. And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.

Boy, if you're hoping for Jesus to come down from the cross, if you're hoping for Elijah to come, and he breathes his last and he dies, that would have been anticlimactic.

It would have been disappointing. Elijah doesn't come. Jesus doesn't come down from the cross. He doesn't save himself.

He dies. Now, some would have been thinking if he was the true Messiah, the Christ, the true King of Israel, why would he allow himself to die this way?

There were many in attendance who were hoping that he would come down from the cross.

[13:38] But he stayed on the cross until his very last breath. And here there's a pivot. Because what happens next in verses 38 and 39, they happen immediately after he breathes his last.

He dies, and then two things happen. Two results happen. The first is in verse 38, and at his death, his death accomplished something unexpected.

unexpected. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Now, if I were making a movie out of this, I would have had a close-up on Jesus in verse 37, breathing his last.

Ah! And he dies. But then, the scene would completely change. And all of a sudden, my camera would be in the temple, the Jewish temple, and it would be looking at the curtain.

It would be moved from the cross, which would have had a line of sight on the temple, and would have gone right into the temple. And so let me just kind of explain what's going on in the temple.

[14:56] There are two rooms in the Jewish temple. And if you were to walk in the front door of the Jewish temple, you walk into the holy place. And the holy place is where the Jewish priests would enter and gather and go about their ministry responsibilities.

But then, there was the inner sanctum, the holy of holies, where the ark was. And that was believed to be where God himself dwelt.

God's present dwelt. And separating the holy place from the holy of holies was this massive, thick, ornate curtain.

God required it to separate him and his holiness from sinners, even the priests. And so when we read here that Jesus breathed his last, he dies, and then the curtain in the temple is torn in two, that is cause and effect.

The death of Jesus opened the way for sinners to come into the presence of a holy God. And do you notice it was a rending from top to bottom?

[16:13] What that means is it's not man accomplished. This is God wrought. God rending. God making a way into his presence through the death of God the Son.

If this was the first time we were reading the Gospel of Mark, and maybe this is the first time you've heard this, this would have been totally unexpected. Through this man's death, God has opened a way into his presence.

But that's just the first result. The second result is that Christ's death revealed someone extraordinary. In verse 39, standing opposite Jesus on the cross, watching this whole thing unfold, was a Roman centurion.

centurion. And when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly, this man was the Son of God.

What you need to understand is that this Roman centurion, he's a non-Jew. He's a Gentile. And he's in charge of 100 men.

[17:37] That's what a centurion is. And apparently, he had responsibility for execution duty that day. Which means he would have been no stranger to death. Likely, he had executed many.

He had seen many a person die. And he sees the way that Jesus dies and he confesses, truly, this man was the Son of God.

You see, the death of Jesus reveals someone extraordinary that he is the Son of God.

It's not by bringing himself down from the cross that shows he's the Son of God. It was remaining on the cross until his death that revealed that he's the Son of God.

what's surprising in the Gospel of Mark is that this centurion is the only human being, the only human being who saw and confessed Jesus as the Son of God.

[18 : 49] The only one. And he had a role in putting Jesus to death. For him to say that Jesus is the Son of God is to say that Jesus is God.

And that is why the curtain was torn in two. Only God the Son could bear the wrath of God the Father in order to reconcile sinners to himself.

Only God could do that. This is God in the flesh. Because Jesus is God, he alone was able to open the way. His substitutionary death removes the penalty of our sin and his sinless life grants us acceptance in God's sight.

He is extraordinary. His death reveals him to be someone who is one of a kind, God himself. himself. So when he breathes his last, the curtain is torn in two.

This is something unexpected, our salvation. And the centurion confesses, truly this is the Son of God.

[20 : 15] This is someone extraordinary. extraordinary. So what if there was no darkness? What if Jesus never cried out, Eloi, Eloi, leme sebetani?

What happens if Jesus did come down from the cross? He didn't die. He lived to an old age of 80 and enjoyed retirement. What happens if he didn't breathe his last on the cross?

There would be no salvation for us. There would be no payment made. There would be no opening, rending of the curtain. Why didn't Jesus just say enough is enough and come down from his cross to display his power?

Because it wasn't loving. that would not have been loving. Our loving king stayed on the cross to bear the full venting of God the Father's wrath to remove the obstacle of sin so that we could enter into an eternal and life-giving relationship with God.

It's only because he stayed on the cross. He had two. He is the Isaiah 53 suffering servant. This was God's will from before the foundation of the world.

[21 : 53] And why would he do it? How deep, how vast, how great is his love. How deep is his love. How deep is his love. How deep