

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: 15 March 2020

Preacher: Rev Malcolm Maclean

[0 : 00] Now we can turn back to Matthew 27 and think together about the verse he said in verse 46.

On about the ninth hour, that's three o'clock, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, Lima, Sabachthani, that is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

I suppose there are many profound questions asked in life.

No doubt there's lots of questions that are, we could say, asked in universities and sometimes they require thoughtful and reasoned answers.

There are other questions that are asked and people struggle to give an answer to them initially, but eventually an answer is provided.

[1 : 40] I wonder what is the profoundest question ever asked. A lot would depend, of course, on who is asking the question and also to whom he is asking the question.

I would say that the profoundest question ever asked is this one. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Who is the one who's asking it? He's the one who knows all answers. He knows the answer to everything.

And yet he's asking a question. It's important with deep questions to ask the right person.

And here we see Jesus doing that. He knows the answer. And the one he's asking the question to, he also knows the answer.

[3 : 15] So in a, I suppose, in an unusual way, both the questioner and the answerer are looking, at least from the questioner's point of view, to think about it together.

Where can we find the answer to this question? Well, the only place I would suggest that we can find the answer is in the Bible.

We won't find it anywhere else. So we'll try and see if we can get light from the Book of Light about this cry that came out of the darkness.

the timing of the time of the time of darkness. The timing of his cry. When did he cry it?

Well, we're told when he did. He did it at the end of the time of darkness. We see that in verse 45.

[4 : 43] This darkness was obviously a supernatural darkness. It wasn't an eclipse because Passover is held at full moon.

and you don't get an eclipse at full moon. So it wasn't what you could call a normal darkness that people experience when an eclipse occurs.

It was a special darkness a unique darkness and during that darkness the Son of God experience being forsaken.

But I do think it's worth noting that he didn't ask the question until the darkness was past. We might have expected him to ask the question at the seventh hour or at the eighth hour or halfway between the eighth and the ninth hour.

but he didn't ask it until the darkness was over. So he is asking for information after the crisis.

[6 : 14] he is not asking for information during the crisis but after it.

And I think that's something to note as well. what does it say about him about Jesus this cry this question.

I think it tells us the truth of his humanity. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us a time to speak a time to keep silent.

As far as we know Jesus has been silent for three hours. And now there comes the time for him to speak.

He's not just God he's man and we would expect him as a man to ask the appropriate question at a particular time.

[7 : 35] What is the appropriate question for the God man to ask after the darkness is over?

And I think the obvious question he would ask after the darkness is over is my God my God why did you forsake me?

It tells us he's the way the truth and the life he'll always say the truth about any given situation.

And here he is he had always known the Father's presence sensed it sensed it in his mind sensed it in his human mind I mean sensed in his human heart he had said the Father is always with me.

The only period when the Father could not be sensed in his normal gracious way was these three hours of darkness.

[9 : 00] He doesn't question Jesus doesn't question the Father as concerning his actions during the darkness.

He didn't question them when they were happening. He questions them after they've happened. After they have finished as it were.

and he wants his father to tell him why he had forsaken him.

It's not a cry of rebellion. It's a cry for consolation, for comfort, for information.

Why have you forsaken me? Connected to showing to us the truth of the Savior's humanity, we can say that this cry also shows his transparency.

[10 : 24] most people, when they find themselves in a situation that they don't understand, initially they try and hide the fact they don't understand.

Or if they find themselves in a situation where they are liable to be regarded as not been fully up with the circumstances, they won't reveal that they don't know.

And here's Jesus and he has come through the most horrendous experience that a person, a human, has ever endured.

And having come through it, he as a real man reveals that he needs comfort and consolation.

And therefore he turns to his father and says, why did you forsake me? It's not a cry of ignorance.

[11 : 49] he knows why he was forsaken. But he wants the father, his father, to personally tell him why he was forsaken.

he was a father, he was a real insight to his transparency. It's not a cry of desperation.

The darkness is over. It's not a cry of desperation. It's, in a sense, a cry of revelation.

salvation. He has survived the darkness. He has endured the darkness.

And now the darkness is coming to an end. He cries, why have you forsaken me? as he speaks, in addition to the truthfulness of his humanity and the transparency he showed, we can also see the trust that he displayed.

[13 : 17] Twice he says that he's trusting in God. It's not a cry of rebellion. it's not even a cry of confusion.

Instead he is saying, as we can see, my God, my God. He's expressing his faith.

We can almost say he's got, if we want to use an illustration here, we could say that each use of my God is like one of our hands.

And he's holding on to God with a double grip. And he's just come through the darkness in which he had been paid the penalty for sin.

It's coming to an end where it's entirely over. Who can say, but it's at the ninth hour, that's when the darkness passes, and at about the ninth hour, Jesus cries this out.

[14 : 25] He is full of faith in God as he asks this question. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

There's nothing missing from his faith. I mean, Jesus was a real man.

He had to live by faith every day. He trusted in God. That's what the people recognized about him.

They taunted him with it, that he was always trusting in God.

where did God seem to be now with the taunt they made against him. But how strong his faith is. He affirms it boldly.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And as I say, this expression of faith doesn't come when everything is bright.

[15 : 34] When the before the darkness, it rather comes as the darkness is coming to a conclusion. So whatever he has experienced in these three hours of darkness, it hasn't weakened his faith to the slightest degree.

If we had felt forsaken by God, for a few seconds, what would that do to our faith?

Our faith would probably be shattered. And that's just after a brief experience of darkness. But Jesus, he had undergone, we can put it this way, the worst darkness that a man had ever known. And yet here he is, he cries out at the ninth hour, my God, my God, almost as if he's saying to anyone who can hear, the God of heaven is still my God, and he has put me through three hours stress, of undescrivable distress.

And I want to say at the end of it, says Jesus, he's still my God. It's an expression of love, isn't it? It's an expression of determination.

[17:20] expression of salvation. It's almost as if he's saying, it doesn't matter what I go through, you're still my God. What a wonderful insight that is into the outlook of Jesus.

we know, of course, that the turmoil had been increasing for Jesus over the last 24 hours, 24 hours or so, maybe 36 hours.

His soul had been troubled, and we're told that three times, that his soul had been troubled. The first time was when the some Gentiles who were up for the Passover came to Thomas and said to Thomas or to Philip, we would see Jesus.

To Philip, they said. And instead of saying to Philip, oh, that's great, we're told that Jesus was disturbed because it was a sign to him.

He was going to die for sinners, and here were some sinners wanting to see him. But what are they meant to see when they see him? And the only appropriate way to see Jesus, we might put it this way, the most appropriate way to see Jesus is not Jesus before the cross, but Jesus after the cross.

[19:16] And this desire these Greeks had, it caused within Jesus' outlook, great turmoil. now is my soul troubled, he said.

And then later on, in Gethsemane, the same experience. He was troubled at the prospect of the cross, and he even asked the father if it was possible for the cup to be taken from him, and he was in great distress in the garden of Gethsemane.

These were only foretastes of what he had endured in the darkness, but here he is now after the darkness, the trouble is over. Why do we think he said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

I think he said it, because for three hours he had missed the father. For three hours he had been without a sense of the father's presence, and surely it's appropriate for any man to say what they miss.

it's appropriate for a husband and wife, when they've been apart, to say they've missed each other, and surely it's appropriate for the son to say to his father, I missed your presence.

[21:16] why have you forsaken me? An intellectual answer is easy to give, and we'll think about that in a minute, but an emotional answer, and here's Jesus, a man who's full of emotion.

He's the man of sorrows. He's also the man who often rejoiced. He was never a stoic, and I suspect here he is saying to his father, father, I missed your presence.

He had gone into the darkness, the darkness where God cannot be sensed, even by the son of God, and he announced that he had missed his father.

what could have been of greater turmoil to him? He had said previously when the other times his soul was troubled, he said, yet I'm not alone because the father is with me.

But between noon and 3 p.m. on Good Friday, he didn't sense the father's presence.

[23:04] and he just said that he missed what he valued the most, the sense of his father.

We can also see from this quotation from Psalm 22, the testimony that Jesus used, which had been given by David centuries before.

As we, how did Jesus cope with the cross? As the punishment of sin was laid upon him, how did he cope with the cross?

Three hours is a long time. Three hours on the cross for Jesus at that particular time could have been as long as eternity.

it all depends on the circumstances we're going through. He had in the darkness.

[24:32] There's no torches for him to use, if you want to put it that way. There's no encouraging voices saying to him, keep going and at three o'clock everything will be okay.

he only had one thing to use as he went through this darkness. And it was Psalm 22.

The three hours that Jesus endured on the cross is totally uncharted territory. You and I can't describe one inch of it.

In territories, countries, we know we can describe mountains and valleys and cities and so on. And we can say a lot about it.

If someone said to us, I'm sending you through an area in which there are no maps, where no one has gone before, how would we respond to that?

[25 : 53] Well, here's Jesus and that's where he's been. He's been to the uncharted country. And as I said a minute ago, you and I can't describe one inch of it.

We don't know what it means to be there. But he went through it all. But he needed a map, a map to take him through it.

And we sang the map. We sang the steps, the stages of Jesus' journey into the uncharted country. And in the psalm we sang, we saw the things that Jesus saw as he was on the cross. And we sang about the soldiers, and we sang about other things, we sang about how he thought about his mother, and so on.

these were the steps that helped him through the uncharted territory. Until it comes to this question, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[27 : 17] it was written beforehand. Who was Psalm 22 written for? Always, in a sense, it's written for us to use.

But who really was Psalm 22 written for? It was written for Jesus to use, as he made his way into a territory that no one had ever been before.

And at the ninth hour, he asks for divine comfort. What would we ask for if we had been through a hostile country?

we might go to the person that sent us and ask him or her what they thought of our journey.

And Jesus, I hear, I think, is asking something similar as he uses a road map that God had provided for him.

[28 : 39] what was the territory that he had gone through? How would we describe the place where Jesus has been for three hours?

In one sense, it's indescribable, but Spurgeon in one of his sermons says this, that Jesus has drifted into the nowhere, the unimaginable region behind the back of God.

The unimaginable region behind the back of God. the place where God doesn't look.

How had Jesus got there? How had he traveled to this strange space?

peace? I think we get an answer to that in the book of Hebrews, where we're told there that Jesus by the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God.

[30 : 17] As he took each step through this unmapped region, he was continually offering himself to the God who was pouring punishment upon him.

Isn't that extraordinary? coming towards him for these hours was cup, we might say, or whatever word we want to use, container after container of divine wrath.

What was he doing as these expressions of divine wrath were coming towards him. Through the spirit, he was continually offering himself without spot to God.

And after each expression of the divine wrath was endured, and I realize we're only trying to explain the unexplainable, but after each session of this outpouring of divine wrath, Jesus offered himself for more.

Amazing. What he saw in his father's hands was his wrath against our sin.

[32 : 06] and as long as there was anything in his father's hands to be poured upon him, he offered himself to take it.

And this went on throughout the darkness. The Holy Spirit he enabled him to offer himself without spot.

That means he was sinless, he was holy, he was undefiled, so this cry is an expression of his holiness.

it's a cry brought about because he's been guided through this space that no one else has been in. He's been guided by the Holy Spirit. What to say and although he is bearing the penalty of sin, he never sinned.

[33 : 33] Although he's made a curse, he remains holy. Although he has had to pay the penalty of sin, he hasn't even got one wrong thought.

If he had said anything inappropriate on the cross in the time of darkness, that would be the end of salvation.

So as he makes this cry, he's saying to us and he's saying to his father and he's telling the truth and he is saying I was forsaken.

He's saying to us I was forsaken for your sin. he's saying to the father, I was forsaken because I'm the sin bearer.

He's the God who for those three hours poured out his wrath upon him and didn't hold back.

[35 : 22] It's now over and Jesus asks for comfort from his father. He wants his father who has been silent to speak.

As we think of the cross, what trust should we have? As we think about Jesus and his journey, how strong should our faith be?

well, we could ask some questions, couldn't we? How far would the love of Jesus for his people cause him to go?

How far would it cause him to go? At one level, the answer is the answer is as far as was necessary.

But what does necessary mean? It meant him being forsaken. The main reason why we should trust Jesus is because he was forsaken.

[37 : 03] because he was willing to be forsaken and because he was actually forsaken.

This is his greatest achievement. This is far more astonishing than his resurrection.

great though his resurrection is. Jesus has been to the undiscovered country.

The country behind the back of God. There our sins were dealt with. There he was forsaken.

And that's the main reason to trust him. how far would he go? We don't want a savior who only went a mile into the undiscovered country.

[38 : 16] We don't want a savior who went three quarters through that country. we want a savior who went the whole way.

We want a savior who was totally forsaken. And he was.

he who can assess everything, who knows the meaning of everything, says that his experience was forsaken.

him. And that's why we should trust him. Beside Jesus physically, at the cross, we know as the penitent criminal, I wonder what he thought of this question of Jesus.

he had come there as a condemned man. And he had his own ideas about what it meant to be condemned.

[39 : 42] As he said to his fellow criminal. But I would say that he discovered the real meaning of condemnation when he heard Jesus' cry.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He had a rough idea of what it was like to be judged by God.

And he had said to Jesus, remember me when you come to your kingdom. God, but when he made that request, he had no idea what Jesus had to go through before the promise that Jesus said to him that this day, the day ended at six o'clock, this day you'll be with me in paradise.

Christ. But Jesus knew where he was going. In a sense, he knew that ahead of him was this terrible experience.

But now at the end, he's saying to his father, why did you forsake me? he wants to be reminded, doesn't he?

[41 : 20] In order for people like that penitent thief, and for people like the soldiers at the foot of the cross, and for people like you and I, why have you forsaken me?

you are forsaken, you were forsaken, in order that all these people would never be forsaken.

That's the answer to the question, isn't it? And he wants his father to give him the answer. He knows the answer already.

but he wants his father to say it. He wants there to be a divine conversation about it.

as we close, what can we say about it now? I suppose we could say that the law's severest punishment, which fell on Jesus and face highest demonstration, occurred simultaneously.

[42 : 51] For three hours, the punishment has been poured out on him. For three hours, Jesus, by faith, went through the unexplored country.

His faith never dimmed. even although it's all dark and all he can see is wrath coming towards him.

Wrath that his people would have experienced that he bore instead. what do we say to Jesus?

What would we like to say to him and answer this question? Surely we should say to Jesus, thank you for going there instead of me.

thank you for being willing to be forsaken. Thank you for experiencing the entire forsakeness.
[44 : 15] And thank you for wanting to talk about it afterwards. Because that is the hope of our salvation.

that he was forsaken. We have to thank him surely for doing what he did.

He didn't just go to the cross of Calvary. Two other men went to the cross of Calvary as well. Jesus went on a far different journey than they went on.

he went into the place where he was forsaken. And I suppose we can say to him or say about him that since he endured the worst darkness he is able to help us in our lesser darkneses.

whatever our darkneses happened to be his one was far darker than ours and therefore he is able to help us when we think we are forsaken when we think we have been abandoned he understands.

[45 : 48] and maybe he says to us even as I spoke to my father about it you come and speak to him too about yours and if you don't trust in Jesus why not?

what do you think of the darkness? do you think it's like a passing night that's just gone or is it your only hope as you face the future that Jesus went into the place of punishment in order for us to be forgiven?

the proof that you value it is that you trust him. May God bless these thoughts to us.