

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Mark 15:33-39 Oculi
Midweek (Lent 3 Midweek) 2022

Saint Mark as well as Saint Matthew give us an account of the three hours of darkness and Christ’s cry of dereliction: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

He is quoting Psalm 22. Or we might say, He is fulfilling it. King David, who suffered many difficult trials in life as a fugitive, constantly hunted for his life, wrote this Psalm. Yet a far greater reality was on Calvary than anything David experienced. Here the eternal Son of David was afflicted with the worst torment even seen. He felt the pains of damnation, and the full weight of judgment for all sins of all men. He truly fell under the condemnation of God’s wrath.

So Christ, who was begotten from eternity, cries out with the words of His ancestor. He speaks either Aramaic, as recorded in Mark’s Gospel, or in the Hebrew language, as Matthew records. The exact words used originally do not matter since the meaning is the same.

Some listening there either misunderstood or deliberately mocked Christ. They said, “He is calling Elijah. Let us see if Elijah will rescue Him.” It is hard to tell if they were intentionally making fun of Him or acted out of ignorance.

One way or another, the bystanders did not understand the tremendous drama that had been taking place before them. This was

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Mark 15:33-39 Oculi
Midweek (Lent 3 Midweek) 2022

the towering climax of thousands of years, the very center of history. This was God’s final solution to the problems of sin and death, namely, that He, not humanity, would take the burden and punishment for our wicked rebellion. Christ the God-Man was utterly rejected upon the Cross. He took the darkness and pain of death upon Himself as our substitute. For three hours He received all that our corrupted hearts and minds and words and actions deserve.

He did not need three hours. A few seconds would have surely been enough. There is no limit to the value of the precious Blood of God that He shed, and the death that He died. His absolute innocence meant that every instant of suffering could pay for the iniquity of many worlds of sinners. Yet He wanted to leave no doubt for you and me. He suffered much more than He had to so that you could confidently believe that all sins, even the worst that you could ever do, are fully paid for by His suffering.

What exactly did He feel? We cannot really know, nor will we ever have to. The pangs of hell wracked Him, but will never touch us. He has taken it away. We need not fear it.

On the Cross He suffered the full force of God’s anger against humanity’s transgressions. This was not merely the Father’s wrath, nor even the Father and the Spirit. This was not one or two persons of the

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Mark 15:33-39 Oculi
Midweek (Lent 3 Midweek) 2022

Trinity attacking the third. We should never think that the Father is mean and wrathful and wants to punish, but the Son is merciful and self-sacrificing. No, all three Persons of the Trinity were full of righteous rage against sin, but also full of gracious love toward sinners.

Yet only One Person received the brunt of that rage. The Father sent the Son, and the Son obediently accepted the terrible torment upon Himself. He alone endured those three hours while mountains of guilt and death were heaped upon Him. He endured the pains of hell, as the Father turned His face away from His own Son. Truly, Christ was abandoned. It was not only play-acting. The complete absence of God’s gracious presence is what gives hell its torment. Christ our dear Lord had to feel that rejection and pain.

If not Him, then it would have been us and all mankind who suffered it all. Indeed, all who reject the sacrifice of Christ and refuse to believe in His work for them will receive judgment and damnation. Although Christ suffered for their sins and fully paid the price, they refuse to believe that He did. So they will be forever separated from God, as Christ was separated on the Cross. Sadly, what He suffered for three hours they will feel forever.

Christ knew, in the midst of the torment, that the Father was still His God. So He calls to Him in prayer. He knew that His lonely cry of

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Mark 15:33-39 Oculi
Midweek (Lent 3 Midweek) 2022

abandonment would be heard. He would not be permanently forsaken. The Father would turn His gracious countenance upon His Son again. The torment would end, and all would be restored.

We should learn this lesson, too. When the sky seems dark to us and God seems distant, He will restore us in time. He allows the darkness that can come in life, although our darkness is never so severe as what Christ suffered. Christ truly was forsaken, and we are not. It only seems so at the time. At such moments, we must turn our eyes to the Cross, where Christ teaches us that our prayers are still heard. No matter how silent and dark the heavens seem, there is always a God in heaven who loves us and answers our prayers.

No matter how many times we contemplate the Cross, we cannot fully grasp this amazing mystery. Here is the heart and center of the Gospel. Here is the amazing love of God in removing judgment from us by commuting that judgment to the Son of God. If not for this moment, nothing else would matter. Our religion would be meaningless. Our faith would be foolish. Any obedience we offered to God would be a wasted effort. Without the Cross, we might as well eat, drink, and be merry, knowing that our afterlife could only be suffering.

But with the Cross, we have hope and a future. We have peace with God, even when the world is only chaos and destruction. We have

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Mark 15:33-39 Oculi
Midweek (Lent 3 Midweek) 2022

confidence that the Lord looks upon us with approval and love, instead of the condemnation and hatred that our sins deserve. We know that our future is brightness and joy, in the place where the sky will never grow dark with God’s judgment, the new heaven and the new earth, where all suffering will be removed forever.

Until that Day, God keep us in faith as our eyes remain focused upon the Cross, which is our salvation. Amen.