

Palm Sunday A SML 2020
MT 27:46

Our Crucified Lord was on the cross for six hours. They nailed him to the cross at nine in the morning and by three in the afternoon, He had died. During those six hours on the cross Jesus made seven statements. Every one of them has profound effect and impact on your life when you understand them.

The first three statements were made in the first three hours of the cross and they were made about other people.

First is a word of forgiveness. “Father, forgive them. They don’t know what they’re doing.”

Second is a word of assurance where Jesus says to the thief on the cross “I assure you, today you’ll be with me in paradise.”

Third is a word of love where Jesus speaks to his mother, Mary, “Woman, behold your Son,” and his beloved disciple, John, “Son, behold your Mother,” the word of love and all the implications behind that.

Now we come to the fourth word which is a word of abandonment.

At about noon everything gets dark. Between noon and three are normally the brightest hours of the day. But God brought in a covering of darkness for the final three hours of Jesus' suffering on the cross. We have the fourth word of Jesus from the cross. We call it the Word of abandonment. We find the story in today's passion narrative, specifically, Matthew 27:46.

"At noon, darkness fell across the whole land." The word darkness here is "skotos" in Greek. It literally means "obscurity." We don't know what God did, whether He just brought in some clouds or a storm or an eclipse or whatever. But it just got very, very dark in the middle of the day. Obscurity. "... darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. At about three o'clock, Jesus cried out in a loud voice..." You watch Hollywood's portrayal of the scene and He kind of says it quietly. But actually it says He cried out in a loud voice. The Greek word means "He screamed." This is the fourth word and it's the most agonizing word of the cross. And Jesus screams out at the top of His lungs and He says "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Which is Aramaic for "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is the fourth word. It is the word of abandonment.

For me, it's the most shocking word. Why have you forsaken me? God forsaking God? Forsaken means deserted. It means rejected. It means abandoned. It means let go. It means forsaken.

Nothing hurts more than abandonment. Nothing hurts more. Some of you know what I'm talking about. You've been abandoned by a spouse and that rips your heart out. Or maybe you were abandoned by a parent as a child. Or you haven't heard from one of your children in years. I saw a man caught on a security cam in Wal Mart. He pushed a young child into Wal Mart in a shopping basket, turned around and walked out. Imagine what that child felt! Nothing hurts more than the feeling of abandonment.

And Jesus, in the last twenty four hours, was progressively abandoned by everybody.

- ✓ First he was abandoned by Judas.
- ✓ Then he was abandoned by the disciples.
- ✓ They all forsook him and fled.

Then at this point Jesus says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

On the cross, Jesus Christ came to earth, God in human form, to die for our sins. He took every known sin of all

mankind's history on himself at that moment. That means every rape that's ever been committed, Jesus is taking the guilt and the sin on himself. Every molestation of a child, he's taking that on himself.

- ✓ Every act of slavery,
- ✓ every lie,
- ✓ every disloyalty,
- ✓ every betrayal,
- ✓ He's taking all of the guilt of the holocaust of six million Jews who were murdered,
- ✓ and every other holocaust,
- ✓ every abortion,
- ✓ the sins of those responsible for this pandemic,
- ✓ all the sins of mine, of yours, and everybody else.

Every evil thing ever done in history, Jesus is taking them on Himself. And since God wants nothing to do with sin, abandonment!

If you want to see the true consequences of sin, if you want to see the damage of it, you just look at the cross. Because Jesus is taking the guilt for every evil thing ever done wrong and He's taken it on himself. And that is the cross. And it is a hideous, it is a horrible, it is a gruesome sight.

The cross shows three of the damaging effects of sin. Not all of them, but three.

First we learn from this – “My God, why have you forsaken me?” We learn that sin alienates. Sin alienates us from God. When Jesus took the sin of the world on Himself all of a sudden He feels abandoned from God. He feels alienated. “My God! Where have you gone? Why have you forsaken me?”

Second, we learn that sin distresses. Sin causes: worry, fear, doubt, bitterness, guilt, resentment, shame, loneliness, insecurity, low self esteem, all of these things. These things are not the real problems. These things are symptoms, symptoms of the real problem and the real problem is sin. Sin distresses.

And third, sin condemns. Jesus is abandoned on the cross. Jesus is distressed on the cross, and Jesus is condemned on the cross.

It's no wonder Jesus' fourth word from the cross is a word of abandonment. My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

This pandemic is the consequence of sin. Not our sins. God isn't sending this virus upon us because of "sin" in general. God doesn't do that. God does not punish in this life.

Not the coronavirus in its origin. To my understanding, that was research with a specific breed of bat gone bad. An honest mistake.

But covering it up, for how long, and as a result of covering it up, this virus has been festering and now it's a pandemic, a pandemic that causes us to ask "God, why have you forsaken us?" on which Our Holy Father Francis preached so eloquently a week ago Friday.

We feel the distress of this sin. Worry, fear, doubt, bitterness, guilt, resentment, loneliness, insecurity, all of these things. These things are not the real problems. These things are symptoms, symptoms of the real problem and the real problem is these are consequences of sin. Sin distresses.

But guess what? Jesus has taken the sinful cause of this coverup to the Cross as well. Jesus has taken the 1.2 million cases, and 64,000 souls as of yesterday (and counting) victims of this pandemic to the Cross.

But let's not end the story here. The story doesn't even end next Sunday with the Resurrection. The story ends with

Jesus Christ, once God forsaken, now risen, and reigning over heaven and earth at the right hand of the Father, pandemic or no pandemic. And from the right hand of the Father, and with faith in Him, all will be well. All will be well.