

**Good Friday Matthew 27:46**  
**Spiesheim, Germany April 10, 2020**  
**MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?**

Every day on the news we hear one story after another about the coronavirus that has spread from China to the US and around the world. As you watch the news, your heart goes out to all those involved, the nurses, the doctors and others who risk their lives to care for the sick and dying. We hear stories of hospitals and intensive care units that are overwhelmed with unprecedented numbers of sick and dying. We pray for all who serve and to those touched by this horrible disease.

Some of the saddest stories are born from the requirements for self-isolation, social distancing and quarantining. Such things have forced airlines, entertainment parks, movie theaters, restaurants, and so many other businesses to close. Those who can work are asked to work at home.

Yet separation becomes most difficult when someone is separated from a father or mother, son or daughter, grandparent or friend who has come down with the virus and is admitted to the ICU. I've read that 80 percent of those admitted to ICU die. The worst part is that most of those who die, die alone – separated from those they love at a time when one's presence is desired the most. The TV and internet are filled with heart breaking stories about this. How tragic it is that one must die alone.

In our meditation for this Good Friday we hear that this is what happened to our Savior over two-thousand years ago. He died alone. Oh, there were people around but that did not change the fact that Jesus died alone. We hear Jesus testify to this when he cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" So why was Jesus forsaken? The question we ask is 'why.' Why was Jesus forsaken as such a tragic and important time in his life?

All of us, I'm sure, know that small children like to ask questions. Most often they ask, "Why?" Why is the sky blue? Why do I have to go to bed? Why can't I stay out past 10? Why do I have to clean my room? Why? Why? Why?

Yet it is not just children who ask 'why?' We all do and it's always been that way. It wasn't long after God had delivered the children of Israel from the Egyptians that they asked, "Why did you bring us out into the wilderness? To die?"

When Job lost his children, his health and all his possessions, he wanted to know why. Martha asked this of Jesus, when he arrived four days after her brother Lazarus had died, "Why didn't you come sooner," she asked, "if you had, he wouldn't have died.'

We ask the same question, don't we? Why do I have so many problems in my life? Why am I sick? Why do I have cancer? Why did I lose my job? Lord, why have you allowed this deadly virus to invade our lives and bring such hardship and sorrow to so many people?

As God's children, we know the answer to too many of these questions even before we ask. Even if we don't, we trust in God to do the right thing. We know that the Lord knows what he is doing. In this regard the Apostle Paul says, "How unsearchable are his judgments; his ways beyond tracing out!" (Ro 11:33). The Lord does things we don't understand or make sense. We simply trust the Lord, who has promised to watch over us and bless us, to keep his word.

Yet, the words that fall from Jesus' lips may cause us to stop and ask "Why?" "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Given that this question is asked by the Son of God, is mind-boggling.

We all know the basics about the crucifixion. Jesus was taken to the cross about nine in the morning. After he had been on the cross for about three hours, darkness set in. The Bible says darkness covered the whole earth. In this darkness we have one of the many miraculous signs that occurred when the Son of God was put to death. Many have tried to find explanations for this darkness. In one of our hymns it says, "Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut its glories in when God, the mighty Maker, died for his own creatures' sin" (CW 129:3). The thought expressed in this hymn uncovers for us the answer to our dilemma of why Jesus was forsaken by his heavenly Father.

When Jesus, the Son of God was born, his Father in heaven called forth the angels to light up the night sky as they sang the praises of the newborn Savior of the world, Christ the Lord. Now the Father in heaven causes darkness to cover the earth during the peak of the day.

Was it not because the heavenly Father, as he looked at his Son, was displeased? The Father's displeasure, however, was not with his Son. He had done his job well. He had kept every law perfectly. He never sinned once in thought, word, or deed. What brought down the heavenly Father's displeasure, even his wrath, was that Jesus bore on himself the sins of the world.

In Romans 3:23 Paul tells us that "God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." God punished Jesus for our sins. That's why the sky turned dark. That's why the heavenly Father punished his only Son with the pain and torment of hell. That's why Jesus had to die. He died because the burden of our sins lay on his back and was punished because of them. He did it to satisfy the justice of God. That's why he was forsaken. God's justice demanded it.

Yet that is not the only answer to Jesus' question. We must dig deeper to find it. There is no passage that sums it up more clearly and simply than found in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Romans 5:8 also says it well: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." It is as simple and yet as amazing as that. Jesus forsaken by his Father because God's justice demanded it. Jesus was forsaken because God loves us.

Yet, how can God love us? How can this be? God hates sin and we are sinners. God demands that sin be punished and we deserve it. Yet, we also know that God loves sinners. He doesn't love our sins but he loves us. And that love drove the Lord to find a way to save us and satisfy his demand for justice at the same time. What an amazing thing God has done. He forsook his Son for a time on the cross so we could spend eternity with him. His love for us so great that he punished his innocent Son in our place.

There is no love like this in the world today. It is an unselfish love. It is a love with a purpose not just based on emotion. It loves the unlovable. It is a love that never fails. It is a love we do not deserve. Therefore, we call it grace. It is love shown to those who are helpless. Therefore, we call it mercy.

It doesn't matter who you are or what you have done. God loves you. *What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for me soul? Amazing grace – how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! God loved the world so that he gave his only Son the lost to save that all who would in him believe should everlasting life receive.*

Dying alone is something that brings sadness to our souls and tears to our eyes. Yet, thank God Jesus did just that for us. He died, forsaken by his Father because of our sin. In love, he died so we might live. To God be the glory. Amen.

Note:

The prayer that follows is responsive but works well to summarize this devotion.

#### GOOD FRIDAY—RESPONSIVE

M: Heavenly Father, you are a just God who accepts nothing less than perfection. All too often we fail to realize how much our sins offend you. We forget that the wages of sin truly is death. We forget that there actually is a hell. Lead us to recognize the seriousness of our sinfulness. Lead us also to admit our inability to make things right with you.

C: Teach us to look to you as the only one who can make us just and right.

M: Today we are reminded not only of your justice but also of your love. You did not spare your own Son but gave him as a ransom for each one of us. Comfort us with the knowledge of this great love. Give us the peace that the forgiveness of sins brings.

C: When we feel our guilt, point us to the cross, where our guilt was washed away in Jesus' blood.

M: Lord Jesus, we thank you for paying the debt that we could not pay. We thank you for coming to earth so that we could be with you forever in heaven.

C: For being our perfect substitute, we thank you, Lord Jesus.

M: Son of God, you offered up your body as an unblemished sacrifice for sin and commended your spirit into the hands of your Father. Teach us to cast the cares of this brief life on our heavenly Father and commit our bodies and souls to his love.

C: Give us the courage to face death, knowing that it is the gate to our home in heaven.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we offer our personal thanks for the forgiveness that you have given us and for the home that you have won for us.

Silent prayer.

M: The cross was once an instrument of death. It is now a sign of life.

C: Dear Savior, we humbly kneel at the cross in awe of your power and of your love.  
Amen.

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