

## The Recitation of Jesus

Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday

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Aledo UMC

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### Gospel Lesson, Mark 15:22-34 by Pastor Dave

<sup>22</sup> They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). <sup>23</sup> Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup> And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

<sup>25</sup> It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup> The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>27</sup> They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>29</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup> come down from the cross and save yourself!” <sup>31</sup> In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! <sup>32</sup> Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

<sup>33</sup> At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup> And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

<sup>35</sup> When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

<sup>36</sup> Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

<sup>37</sup> With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

### Sermon Text, Psalm 22:1-21 by Pastor Dave

<sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?

<sup>2</sup> My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest.

<sup>3</sup> Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;  
you are the one Israel praises.

<sup>4</sup> In you our ancestors put their trust;  
they trusted and you delivered them.

<sup>5</sup> To you they cried out and were saved;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

<sup>6</sup> But I am a worm and not a man,  
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.

<sup>7</sup> All who see me mock me;  
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

<sup>8</sup> “He trusts in the LORD,” they say,  
“let the LORD rescue him.

Let him deliver him,  
since he delights in him.”  
9 Yet you brought me out of the womb;  
you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast.  
10 From birth I was cast on you;  
from my mother’s womb you have been my God.  
11 Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near  
and there is no one to help.  
12 Many bulls surround me;  
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.  
13 Roaring lions that tear their prey  
open their mouths wide against me.  
14 I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.  
My heart has turned to wax;  
it has melted within me.  
15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;  
you lay me in the dust of death.  
16 Dogs surround me,  
a pack of villains encircles me;  
they pierce my hands and my feet.  
17 All my bones are on display;  
people stare and gloat over me.  
18 They divide my clothes among them  
and cast lots for my garment.  
19 But you, LORD, do not be far from me.  
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.  
20 Deliver me from the sword,  
my precious life from the power of the dogs.  
21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;  
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

### Sermon by Pastor Dave, “The Recitation of Jesus” <sup>1</sup>

The scriptures record seven sayings of Christ from the cross:

- “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke)
- “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke)
- “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” (Luke)
- “Woman, here is your son...Here is your mother.” (John)
- “I thirst.” (John)
- “It is finished.” (John)

The only saying of Christ from the cross in Matthew and Mark is, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani,*” which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” It is also the only saying from the cross which is recorded in more than one gospel account.

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<sup>1</sup> Sources used: Willem VanGemeren in the Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 5 (Zondervan, 1991) and Donald Williams, The Communicator’s Commentary: Psalms 1-72, Word, 1986.

That saying has produced some absolutely awful sermons with some reprehensible theology. Years ago, I heard one preacher say something like, “As Jesus bore the sin of the world on the cross of Calvary, God the Father was so disgusted with Jesus that the Father turned his back on his Son, forsaking him, as he hung on that cross.”

Why did Jesus utter the words, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” Was it because God had indeed forsaken him? I don’t believe that for a minute. God is not in the business of abandoning anyone. Notice the prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 139:

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

<sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

<sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

<sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

<sup>11</sup> If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,”

<sup>12</sup> even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

I do not believe that Jesus was declaring that his Father had forsaken him. Rather, I believe that Jesus was finding comfort in the scriptures by quoting Psalm 22. And I don’t think he stopped after verse 1. I have a strong suspicion that Jesus recited the entire Psalm.

On the day Jesus was raised from the dead he appeared to his disciples. At first, they were startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. But Jesus calmed their fears. Then “he said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’”

*And the Psalms.*

The next verse says, “Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:44-45).

Doesn’t it stand to reason that one of the Psalms Jesus helped them understand was Psalm 22? Especially given the fact that Jesus was clearly quoting it as he suffered and died on Calvary’s cruel cross.

Psalm 22 is a prophetic psalm, looking ahead to the crucifixion of Christ, though it was written long before the existence of the Roman Empire or the use of crucifixions as a means of capital punishment. It was originally written by David as a Psalm of both anguish and joy.

One can only imagine what David was experiencing when he cried out, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

And yet, the very fact that David opens this prayer by addressing God so personally is itself an irony. God had not forsaken him; if God had, then David wouldn’t have been able to pray this prayer to him.

No, God had not forsaken David but that didn’t change the fact that David *felt* as though God had forsaken him. And yet, you have to admire David because he presses past his feelings to pray this prayer to God despite the fact that he feels as though God has abandoned him.

When you come right down to it, David praying this prayer was really an act of faith as well as an example for us: we will face times when we will feel as though God has abandoned us. If you haven’t had one of those “dark nights of the soul,” you will. And when you do, pray anyway. Don’t let your depression and despair trick you into thinking that there’s no use in praying. God is still there; God is still listening. God is still answering prayer.

God who is everywhere present is always present with you. But that doesn’t mean that we’re always tuned into his presence. Psalm 22:3 tells us one way for us to tune into God’s presence once again.

*But you are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in you...and you delivered them.*

If you want to find God, go to the place where God's people are praising him. If you are going through a dark valley, you might be tempted to stay home and skip worship. But that's the time when you need worship the most—just to soak up the atmosphere of praise to God.

If you are going through a dark valley, search your memory banks for stories of how God delivered his people in the past. David did that but then immediately confessed, "I am a worm" (vs. 6). Not literally, of course. Rather, "I am a worm" expressed David's feelings and self-image. He has lost his sense of dignity and even of his humanity. Likewise, on the cross, Jesus lost his sense of dignity and even of his humanity. But who could blame him? He was stripped naked, mocked and shamed on the cross. And that made him vulnerable to the accusations of those around him, just as centuries before, it made David vulnerable to the accusations of those around him.

Centuries before the Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders were born, their insults were predicted in Psalm 22: "He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him. Let the Lord deliver him" (vs. 8)—sarcastic words recorded not only in Psalm 22, but in Matthew 27:43.

And remember that Jesus, by way of the Holy Spirit, inspired David to pen those words on papyri. Now as he hung on the cross quoting not just the first verse of Psalm 22, but undoubtedly the entire psalm, he was able to remind himself: *You knew this was going to happen. You knew what you were getting into when you came into this world.*

And with that, Jesus found the hope that is found in verse 9:

*"Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help (vs. 9-11).*

With that David—and Jesus—turns his attention from the mockers surrounding him to God: confident that God would be near him to the very end—just as God was with him at the very beginning.

Think of it: our God is a cradle-to-grave God. **He's with us in the womb and he's with us to the tomb.** Our God is a cradle-to-grave God and for Jesus, the cross was part of the very plan that began in a manger with a virgin mother named Mary.

*Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me (v. 12).* David compares his enemies to the bulls of Bashan. Today Bashan is known as the Golan Heights. Bashan was a lush, well-watered region which consequently produced large, well-fed cattle. Jesus faced more than his share of enemies but the greatest enemy he faced on that cross was death. Death circled him. And death was a well-fed enemy.

*I am poured out like water (v. 14).* Water, of course, is the staple of life. But in the Old Testament, bodies of water were metaphors for chaos. Or perhaps on a more literal note, John tells us that when the soldiers pierced Jesus' side, blood and water flowed forth.

*All my bones are out of joint (v. 14).* Crucifixion will do that to a person.

*My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth (v. 15).* As he hung on the cross, Jesus said, "I thirst" and he was given a cheap, sour vinegar-wine to drink.

*They have pierced my hands and my feet (v. 16).* One can only wonder what David was experiencing when he wrote this verse. It is, of course, a vivid depiction of crucifixion. It was

also a prophecy guaranteeing Jesus would die on a cross—the Roman method of execution—rather than by stoning, which was the Jewish method of capital punishment.

*People stare and gloat over me (v. 17).* Public shame was an important part of crucifixion.

*They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.* That's exactly what the soldiers did, unwittingly fulfilling prophecy in the process.

*But you, O Lord, be not far off; O my strength, come quickly to help me (vs. 19).* David—and Jesus—come back to the realization that God never forsakes anyone, especially his own children.

Psalm 22 ends with an extended song of hope and praise. Undoubtedly as Jesus recited this psalm from the cross, he was anxious to get to that part of the psalm and to quote it that he might draw strength from it as he suffered on that cross. Ultimately, he was able to declare, *“(God) has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one.”* In other words, he revises the assessment he made in verse 1. God has not forsaken him, even as he bore the weight of human sin. *“He has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.”*

Listen to the hope-filled closing stanza of Psalm 22:

<sup>22</sup> I will declare your name to my people;  
in the assembly I will praise you.

<sup>23</sup> You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!  
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

<sup>24</sup> For he has not despised or scorned  
the suffering of the afflicted one;  
he has not hidden his face from him  
but has listened to his cry for help.

<sup>25</sup> From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.

<sup>26</sup> The poor will eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek the LORD will praise him—  
may your hearts live forever!

<sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth  
will remember and turn to the LORD,  
and all the families of the nations  
will bow down before him,

<sup>28</sup> for dominion belongs to the LORD  
and he rules over the nations.

<sup>29</sup> All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;  
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—  
those who cannot keep themselves alive.

<sup>30</sup> Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord.

<sup>31</sup> They will proclaim his righteousness,  
declaring to a people yet unborn:  
He has done it!