### “My God, My God” Steve Finlan for The First Church, Good Friday, Apr. 15, 2022

**Matthew 27:46–47**

46And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.”

The crowd is mistaken about what Jesus is saying, and I think many Christians have been mistaken about the meaning as well. Some in the crowd fail to recognize that Jesus is reciting Psalm 22, which begins with this cry of desperation. It may be that it corresponds to how Jesus feels at that moment, but I think it’s important to not project onto this experience any assumption that the Father actually forsook Jesus. We need to know the Bible well enough to know that Psalm 22 ends up being one of the great affirmations of faith in all the Psalms, which is probably why Jesus chose it.

There are other lines in there that correspond to what Jesus is experiencing: “I am poured out like water” (22:14). “Dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me” (22:16). But the overall message of this psalm affirms God’s care. “He did not hide his face from me” (22:24), it says, and “dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations” (22:28). Jesus chose a psalm that rises from suffering to vindication. Further, in early Christian thought, Old Testament passages with “Lord” were understood to refer to Jesus. So the psalm actually contains a promise that applies to Jesus himself: “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him” (v. 27). Some day this will come true.

Jesus really suffered, but it is not true that he lost hope, nor that the Father turned away from him. There was never any rupture in the Trinity. The Father never repudiated or forsook the Son. Nor does Jesus forsake us. He stands with us through all our experiences. God’s love is always with us.