***“Who He Is”*** by Stephen Finlan at The First Church, Good Friday, April 19, 2019

**Matt 27:46** My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Matthew shows the crowd misunderstanding Jesus, thinking that he is calling for Elijah. Actually, he is reciting the beginning of Psalm 22. He knows and loves the Scriptures, and the Psalms are the place to go regarding pain and suffering. This psalm expresses intense distress here at the beginning, and it says other relevant things. It speaks of being surrounded by enemies, mocked (vv. 7–8), encircled by bulls or dogs, by “a company of evildoers” (vv. 12, 16). The fools who taunt Jesus are like a pack of wild dogs

But the psalm is also full of faith, and this is in Jesus’ mind, as well. Verse 24 says God “did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted . . . but heard when I cried to him.” Then the psalm expresses a very Jesus-like idea, when it says: “ALL the families of the nations shall worship before him” (v. 27). The inclusion of the Gentiles was also a key teaching of Jesus. When he was overturning the moneychangers’ tables, according to Mark 11:17, he quoted Isa 56:7, “my house shall be called a house of prayer for ALL peoples.”

When he quotes Psalm 22 from the cross, Jesus has not suddenly lost his faith, or become separated from God. Rather, he is reciting a psalm that expresses sorrow over people who are behaving like wild animals, and goes on to express faith that all nations shall turn to God.

The Gospel exposes the human cruelty and religious hypocrisy that got Jesus killed, and also that it is the character and the Spirit of Jesus that deliver us from cruelty and lies. It is the Son of God who saves us. It is his creative power that is saving. John’s gospel tells us “without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3 RSV). It is not what was *done* to Jesus that saves us; it is *who he is*, that saves us. So stay connected to Jesus.