

Good Friday 2020 — Isolated for Intimacy

Sermon File Type	Sermon
Passages	Matthew 27:46
Sermon Series	Stand Alone
Topics	Forsaken; Wrath; Crucifixion
Tags	
Date	April 10, 2020

Introduction (Connection):

Amen; I praise God that we can worship as one together.

If you missed the first part of this stream: Yes, that was a prerecorded worship set; therefore no, I didn't change clothes really quickly.

Tension:

We are approaching almost a full month of social distancing restrictions that have been placed on us by our government that, I believe, is working to save lives and lower the curve of the novel COVID-19 pandemic.

This means, for many of us, a full month of no work...
no gatherings with other people in your homes or theirs...

no meeting up for coffee, no recreational activities...

no place to take your kids to escape the confines of your house.

We've been told to stay home... and we've been at this for almost a month.

For you self-acclaimed "introverts..." are you happy now?

No, actually, I'm sure you're even wishing for that one on one conversation by the water cooler at work too.

Let me ask a question to all of you that might land exactly where you're at right now.

In light of the social distancing and stay at home orders, are you lonely?

Are you feeling cut off?

I've been reading up on the psychological affects that doctors and psychologists are concerned about with these stay-at-home orders and the number one thing their dreading is an **epidemic of loneliness.**

They define loneliness **as a gap** between (1) what we feel we need from other people and (2) what we feel we are receiving from other people.

When we crave support from our friends, family, and other loved ones but don't receive it, we feel lonely.

But if you're a lone-star ranger who doesn't require much support from others, then you're less prone to loneliness and you probably can't relate to this at all.

Biomedical researchers have even found that loneliness interferes with the body's inflammatory response and even prompts brain cravings similar to hunger.¹

Like, you and I have cravings for social interactions; we have an inherent instinct for relationships, and right now we're being deprived of that... which directly leads to loneliness.

So for us who are at home, hopefully healthy and safe, loneliness comes easy.

Imagine laying in a hospital bed because you have COVID-19 and doctors have determined you won't survive it... and your family and friends can't even come in to see you or even say good bye because they've restricted visits for fear of spreading the virus...

Who wants to die alone? How lonely would that feel?

Tonight, we're going to marinate in the truth that Jesus himself did die all alone, that Jesus himself experienced the worst kind of loneliness imaginable to man.

We had the privilege of having John and Nancy Williams read to use the account of Jesus' crucifixion from the gospel of John.

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/behavioral-health-matters/202004/lonely-in-lockdown>

I want us to open our bibles to Matthew 27, to look at something Jesus said that Matthew included in his crucifixion account.

All the gospel accounts of Jesus' crucifixion include much of what Jesus said, like pleas of forgiveness for his persecutors, conversations with the two thieves, and entrusting the care of his mom to John.

Matthew includes only one of these words from Jesus on the cross, which is going to be the only focus of our conversation tonight...

v. 46 — “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which translates, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

I'm not going to have 5 application points to a better version of you tonight... most of the time it is really good to just marinate in the deep truth of the cross.

Too many of us see the cross as merely a transaction of debt forgiveness, and you're missing the massive scope of what all was endured and accomplished.

If you look at all the abandonment of Jesus' friends and his physical beatings as the extremity of Jesus' suffering, then you've wildly underestimate the severity of the cross.

It is much deeper than we could ever imagine or begin to know.

The early Scottish preacher Robert M'Cheyne described his attempt to understand the depth of the cross in this way:

"I feel like a little child casting a stone into some deep ravine in the mountain side, and listen to hear its fall—but listening all in vain."²

I hope that is how we feel leaving tonight as we focus in on "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me."

Exposition:

This is actually a direct quote from Psalm 22, one of the most perplexing Psalms ever.

Let me read to you some of it.

22:1 — *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

22:6-8 — *"But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸ "He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"*

22:16-18 — *"For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."³*

² Robert Murray M'Cheyne quoted by Timothy Keller, *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering* (New York, NY: Riverhead, 2013), 151.

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 22:1, 6-8,16–18.

David isn't describing illness or persecution, he's writing of execution, which obviously never happened to David.

Jesus shouts this out to say, "David was pointing to me! I am being executed here."

For Jesus to suffer and die a criminals death while claiming to be God himself doesn't bode well for us Christians...

This is why Gnostics separate Jesus' humanity from his divinity during this time because God could in no way suffer.⁴

It is hard to picture a suffering God... but that's exactly what we have here, and he is accomplishing our salvation through his infinite suffering and perfect obedience.

What exactly was the infinity of his suffering? The answer is **isolation**.

First we see this supernatural darkness cover all the land for three hours, from noon till 3pm, and there is only silence from the cross.

⁴ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew, vol. 22*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 419.

A similar darkness fell across Egypt for three days before the passover;⁵ here it is for three hours before the Lamb of God is slain for the sins of the world.

This darkness means judgment; it means wrath.

And after three hours of this darkness, the silence is pierced with a cry from Jesus.

This isn't just a loud voice; the word in the Greek here means to shriek or scream in terror.

This cry comes from the intensity of his sorrow and misery as Isaiah 53 said he'd be a man of sorrows, stricken with grief.

Think about it; after everything Jesus has gone through so far... being betrayed by his disciple, abandoned by his close friend, spat on, mocked, slapped, beaten, flogged, and falsely accused, nailed to a cross and yet the whole time he maintains his composure.

He doesn't scream when the flesh is torn off his back; he doesn't bellow when the thorns pierce his skull or call to God when the nails puncture his hands and feet.

No, it is here, after all of that, in v. 46 he finally screams in agony... is he finally breaking?

No; he is now experiencing infinite suffering.

⁵ Exodus 10:21-23

What is his complaint? What is it that terrorizes our savior?

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

He wasn't crying out about his physical pain; he was crying out about an infinite suffering only the darkness could hint at.

This is a suffering that makes all of his physical suffering feel like a fleabite in comparison.⁶

It is because here, the full punishment for sin was being poured out over him, based on what he is crying out.

Isn't it odd that both Matthew and Mark include in their accounts of the crucifixion what Jesus said in Aramaic before the Greek translation, which is what we see in English?

Why? Most likely because it was so agonizing that it penetrated his disciples' inner depths with terror so that they forever remembered, “Eli, Eli, lema sabacthani.”

Notice the question which form's Jesus' torture; it isn't one of “have you forsaken me,” or “will you forsake me,” it is...

“Why?” “Why have you forsaken me...” It's speaking of a present reality... Jesus has been forsaken.

⁶ Timothy Keller, “The Crucifixion” (sermon, Gospel In Life, August 10, 2015), available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaXKcFR6ErU&t=1028s> [accessed April 9, 2020].

Forsaken means abandoned... it means left alone... isolated... cast out.

In one of my favorite songs, *How Deep the Father's Love for Us*, we sing, "How great the pain of searing loss / The Father turns His face away..."

Not only had all his disciples abandoned him...

Not only had all the crowd condemned him to death by crucifixion...

Now Jesus is being isolated from the Father...

Friends, the punishment for us turning away from God is exclusion, separation from God, isolation.

We were made to be in God's presence, but we were sent away for our sin.

Yet Jesus here is experiencing exclusion for all of us... isolated from His Dad.

He abruptly loses intimate communion with His Dad which he had enjoyed for an eternity past.

This is the horror of the cross; this is the most severe conflict, the greatest torture... isolation from God.

Nothing could be more dreadful to feel than the agony of losing love.

If you've experienced the death of someone you love, you're familiar with this kind of agony.

If someone you kind of know abandons you, that may be a little rough, but you could probably excuse it away.

A good friend who leaves—that's heartbreaking.

If you lose a child or a parent, that is devastating.

Lose a spouse, that is terrifying.

Jesus' intimate oneness with God was torn away from him... this is what Jesus lost.

Any lost love we've ever experienced is nothing compared to this.

You know how pastors will pray over you a benediction from Numbers 6 that says, "May the Lord bless you and keep you, make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you..."

Jesus experienced the exact opposite of that.

"The Lord curse you and cast you out. The Lord turn his face away from you and reject you. The Lord forsake you and give you agony."

Gal. 3:13 — *"Christ... [became] a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'"*⁷

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 3:13.

Why? Why would Jesus be willing to subject himself to isolation from his dad?

Remember, he even said, "No man takes my life from me, I chose to lay it down."

Why did he willingly submit himself to being forsaken and cursed by God?

What did he get by coming to earth that he didn't already have before? US!!!

Here's the truth that can change your life for eternity.

Jesus was isolated from God so we can have intimacy with God.

You see, Jesus became sin who knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus was despised so we could be accepted.

Jesus was cursed so we could be redeemed.

Jesus was condemned so we could be forgiven.

Jesus was rejected so we could be adopted.

Jesus lost his greatest love so we could find the greatest love!

Jesus was isolated so we could have intimacy!

Can't you see, you and I will spend eternity waiting to hear the rock in the ravine finally sound only to find it will never reach the bottom of the depths of the significance that Jesus was isolated so we could have intimacy?

All the while we get to enjoy a nearness and closeness with the God who redeemed us, freed us, forgave us, sustains us, fights for us, and died for us in our place.

Jesus experienced the torture of isolation so we could experience the all-surpassing joy of intimacy with God.

Application/Challenge:

Now, the reason I word it this way is because, right now, many of us are feeling isolated because of social distancing restrictions.

We are being told we have to keep to ourselves in our own homes for the protection of others, and I am in complete agreement with that.

We are being isolated.

We are tasting a single drop of the sufferings of Jesus right now... and we ought to rejoice as we share in the sufferings of Christ.⁸

⁸ 1 Peter 4:13

There is intimacy with Christ to be found in this isolation.

Are you seeking it? If you seek for it, you will find it. God promised.

James 4:8 is a verse my kids just memorized, “If you draw near to God, he will draw near to you.”

Christ endured the greatest agony so you could have intimacy with God.

God has not forsaken you; this pandemic has not cut you off from God’s love.

Intimacy with God can be deeply enjoyed in these strange times, all because Jesus was isolated from God.

Conclusion (Cast Vision):

[Invitation to new believers]

[Prayer]

Benediction: Isaiah 53:4-5 — *“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”*⁹

⁹ Is 53:4–5.

It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.