

THE SCREAM OF SUFFERING

- I. The details are dark
- II. The meaning is mysterious
- III. The response is relevant

INTRODUCTION

You know, what an awesome & amazing place **Calvary** really is!

- it's where heaven & earth actually met as God Almighty was nailed to a cross, suffered & shed His blood & died there for your & my sins!
- & that solemn, sacred, holy, horrible hour should cause us to hang our heads in shame & confess in praise & thanks to Lord:
 - "And from my smitten heart with tears 2 wonders I confess: the wonders of His glorious love & my unworthiness."

Now, as we stand there on holy ground, we will never, ever really be able to completely understand it.

- for it is just too astonishing & awesome.
- it staggers our imagination; it's too big for puny minds to grasp.

Yet we can begin to comprehend something of its real meaning when we listen to the words of the One who died there, as we have been doing past 3 Sundays.

- we have heard that dying man on Calvary 1st speak the word of divine mercy in the middle of all that horrible hate & cruelty: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."
- & that's what Jesus & His cross are all about: to bring God's mercy.
 - that mercy, which we all need, & is forever available for us at the cross.

Then we also heard Jesus speak the word of hope to a dying thief: "Today, you will be with me in paradise."

- & what wonderful hope because it speaks of the certainty of the eternal victory & the glorious future that awaits God's people, even those in the middle of suffering.
 - & with that word now every scared, guilt-stricken sinner can flee to Jesus in faith & repentance, & know He will save us, & we will be at His side eternally.

Then we heard the dying Christ speak the word of compassion to his mother, **Mary**, & to His disciple, **John**.

- He said: "Woman, here is son; [John,] here is your mother."
- now that teaches the cross is a place of compassion.
 - "It shows that suffering[, broken] people are an ever-present concern of God. Hearing Jesus' words of compassion should encourage us to come to him with our sorrows & in our need."

Well, today, we listen again to that dying person on **Calvary** as He speaks a **4th time** & gives us more glimpses into the cross' meaning & message of salvation.

- & Jesus utters probably the most profound & startling word He ever spoke from the cross, the word of despair: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”
- now that word tells us more clearly what Good Friday is really all about, even though we will never fully understand the meaning of what Jesus was saying with His SCREAM OF SUFFERING.
 - we consider then this 4th cross-saying: **1st**, the dark details; **2nd**, the mysterious meaning.
 - & **3rd**, the relevant response.

THE DARK DETAILS

Now it to understand the meaning of our Savior's **4th saying** we must **1st** notice **THE DARK DETAILS** surrounding its utterance.

- Mat.27:45 says: “From the 6th hour until the 9th hour darkness came over all the land.”
- you see, before this darkness the scene on Calvary had been a noisy, busy one from 9 am. to noon with a hammer's ring; the shouting, swearing, mocking mob; & Jesus' 1st 3 words.

But then suddenly the scene changed as darkness descended on **Calvary** at 12:00, high noon, & it lasted for 3 hours or until around 3:00 pm.

- & then Jesus spoke His 4th saying.
- no doubt that darkness brought a strange silence, & shock & fear & awe over the crowd.
- & all you could hear were the heavy, torturous breathing & groaning of the victims on the cross.

Well, that darkness had to be a miracle, for it happened at noon when the sun shines brightest.

- & it couldn't have been a sun eclipse, for it was passover time, the time of the full moon.
 - & we are told no sun eclipse happens at full moon.
- besides Luke says: “The sun stopped shining.”

And so this darkness was a supernatural event--the 1st of many that happened at Christ's crucifixion that day.

- & with that darkness God is telling us something about the cross.
- maybe, 1st of all, as the hymn puts it: “Well might the sun in darkness hide & shut its glories in, when Christ the mighty Maker died, for man, the creature's sin.”

To be sure, those miraculous events, like the darkness, the earthquake, the opening of graves, was God telling us that the person on the middle cross was more than just any ordinary man.

- instead He was the very eternal Son of God Himself, the mighty Creator & Ruler of the universe, suffering & dying for the sins of the world.
- no wonder all of nature shook when God died that day for us sinners.

But the darkness was more than just nature's reaction & response to its Maker & Lord dying on a cross.

- for its real meaning is found in Christ's 4th word, & also gives meaning to that saying.
- for note: Bible describes sin as darkness & holiness as light.

Th'fore that miraculous, midday darkness on **Calvary** symbolized sin & death & God's punishment of "outer darkness" for sin.

- the darkness was a sign of being without God in hell's eternal damnation, the final end of sinners.
- that is to say, that darkness meant Jesus was actually suffering hell.
 - He was bearing God's eternal anger & judgment against our sin to its eternal end & degree.

And so, in those 3 long, dark, dreadful hours Jesus was forsaken by God.

- He was left alone on the cross to pay the full price for sin to gain salvation & eternal life.
- that's why at the end of that period of silently suffering hell, Jesus suddenly screamed with a loud voice: "My God, My God, why, why have you forsaken & abandoned me?"

II. THE MYSTERIOUS MEANING

Now there's surely lot of **MYSTERY** concerning the **MEANING** of Jesus' 4th cross-word that we will never fully understand.

- we are told M.Luther once sat & studied it for hours without food.
- he then got up & said in amazement: "God forsaken by God! Who can understand that?"

No, we can never fully plumb the depth of the meaning of Christ's agonizing cry as He experienced the full measure of God's eternal punishment for sin--the God-forsakenness of hell!

- for, to completely comprehend it, we would have go to hell itself.
- but thanks be to God we don't have to go there because Jesus cried: "God, why have you deserted me?"
- & yet we can & we must understand some of its truth for it is the central meaning of the cross.

Well, 1st of all, we can't explain its meaning by saying it was just a desperate cry of a pathetic man dying a tragic death as a martyr for a lost cause, as some people do.

- that in such terrible agony of the cross he saw all was lost so that he lost his faith & confidence in God.
- & he cried in doubt & discouragement: "O, my God, why have you left me?"

For nowhere do **Scriptures** picture Jesus as a martyr in doubt wondering why He had to go to a cross.

- instead we see people didn't take His life from Him.
- but He gave His life voluntarily & victoriously on Golgotha.

Also notice **Matt.27** says: "Jesus cried out with a loud voice" when He uttered His **Scream of Suffering**.

- that shows this 4th saying was no weak, wimpy plea of doubt or complaining or uncertainty.

- but it was a clear, certain shout of confidence & victory & faith.

We see that too by the fact Jesus screamed: “My God, my God.”

- surely that wasn't cry of fear, but of true faith.
- th'fore, even though He was in hell itself, forsaken by Lord, suffering His terrifying, terrible anger against sin, yet Jesus didn't give up on God or forsake Him.
 - though He cried in agony, yet He also cried in trust & triumphant-notice: “My God, my God!”

That means hell & sin didn't conquer Christ.

- for, on that cross in the middle of hell with the crushing, cruel load of all the sins of the world on Him, Jesus still remained faithful to God.
- He then conquered sin & hell so that His next cries came quickly: “I Thirst! It is finished!”
- the victory had been won, for Jesus had been all way to hell & back in those 3 long dark, damned hours.
 - He had met & defeated the enemy so that He earned salvation for sinners.

And so the only explanation of 4th saying is that Jesus was actually forsaken by God Father for a moment on the cross.

- He was utterly abandoned by God, & experienced hell's fullness & fierceness: its God-forsakenness.
- now that word forsakenness means to abandon or leave someone alone & helpless in trouble.

And many of us know something of the feeling when we are forsaken by someone & their love.

- & it can be a most frightening experience, can't it?
- but to be forsaken by God in the hour of greatest trial & need, that has to be the worst.

And don't we often say of people, who are completely gone in sin & evil, like a drunkard or a druggie or a prostitute, they are “God-forsaken men or women”?

- & yet they really aren't.
- for they are still in the presence of Lord's love & mercy so that there is still hope & help for them.

Well, there was One who was really a God-forsaken person, & it was Jesus on **Calvary's cross.**

- you see, Jesus had known all His life what it felt like to be forsaken by human beings.
 - by part of His own family, by His own hometown, by His own country & friends & followers.
 - yet in all that He still had the loving fellowship of God Father. (OVER)
- to be sure, Jesus had come from the presence of Father so that it was must have been a horrible thing to leave heaven with all its glory & live in this world full of sin & evil to save it.
 - but still God Father was always by His side in a loving, caring companionship.

That is, until now on **Calvary's** cross where Jesus was cast out of God's loving presence to endure His anger.

- how it is possible? we just don't know, for it is a mystery that defies all human thought & reason.
- but we do know it happened, for Bible says Jesus uttered, as Max Lucado writes, “{The 4th saying is] the most gut-wrenching cry of loneliness in history. Never have words carried so much hurt. Never has one been so lonely.”

Th'fore we can only ask: “Why, God, why did you abandon Jesus on Calvary?”

- & answer is the meaning of the cross itself.
- & the reason God did it is seen, as Max Lucado also writes, “[How the OT. priests transferred the sins of people on the scapegoat, & sent it out into the desert to be alone to bear their sin.] Now on Skull's hill, the sin bearer is again alone. Every lie ever told, every object ever coveted, every promise ever broken, [every sin] is on his shoulders. He is sin. God turns away [& says:] ‘Run, goat, run!’ Jesus, who had been God for eternity, is now alone. Christ, who was the expression of God, is abandoned. The trinity is dismantled. The Godhead is disjointed. Unity is dissolved. It is more than Jesus can take. He withstood the beatings, remained strong at his mock trials. He watched in silence as those He loved ran away. He did not retaliate when insults were hurled nor did He scream when the nails pierced his wrists. But, when God turned his head, that was more than he could handle. ‘My God!’ The wail rises from parched lips. His holy heart is broken. The sin bearer screams as He wanders in the eternal wastelands. [& walks] the desert of loneliness. ‘Why? Why did you abandon me?’”

We see then Jesus was forsaken by God on the cross because of our sin so He could save us from it & we can live forever with Him.

- that's the awful price that had to be paid to rescue sinners from death.
- you see, there was just no other way than that God's Son had to go to hell on Calvary, because God is a just & holy God.

O yes, God is love too as we see so clearly at the cross where He sacrificed His only Son to save us.

- but His love is holy & pure so that He can't look on sin & tolerate evil, Hab.1:13 says.
- that's why, when Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us, God couldn't look upon Him anymore.
 - but He had to turn away from Him there on the cross.

And too, God is just in His love so that He has to do what He says when He states in **Ez.18 & Ro.6** that the price sin pays is death so that person who sins must die.

- & death means separation from God, an eternal God-forsakenness.
- so then, as sinners, we are under the sentence of death condemned to die forever apart from God.

Th'fore, for God to also be loving & merciful toward us, He had to then 1st fulfill the demands of His justice so sin had be punished with eternal death.

- He had to then punish our sin by having someone else take our place & bear our punishment, die for us the death of eternal separation from God.
- & there was only One who could do, & that was God Himself coming here & going to the cross as Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Th'fore Christ took our place & our responsibility for all our sins so that they were all placed on Him.

- &, when the full load of sin was on Him, He cried: “My God, my God, why have you deserted me?”
 - He was abandoned by Father so He could suffer the divine anger & eternal punishment for sin.
- so Jesus was condemned to die as a guilty sinner so that we can live eternally with Lord.
 - God forsook Him so He could accept us forever.
 - Jesus went to hell on the cross so we can now go to heaven.

We see then how amazing & awesome God's love is for us sinners when we look at **Calvary's** cross.

- Jo.13 says: “Jesus, having loved own, loved them to the end.”
- in other words, God's love is so great that He actually turned away from His only Son so Jesus could bear the full punishment of sin to its final, eternal end of hell.

And make no mistake about this wonderful truth: Jesus did go all way from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell to fully & finally pay for all our sins.

- His Scream of Suffering verifies & assures us of that.
 - that, for all who believe in Him, hell has been completely done away with.
- we can then be positively sure that Jesus opened the way for you & me to be saved.
 - there is now full & free salvation & eternal life to be gotten at Christ's cross on Golgotha.
 - & it is there for all who come & receive it in repentance & by faith in the crucified Christ.
- & we can be certain that in Him we will never have to go to hell ourselves, for there is no more punishment for us to bear.
 - there isn't because Jesus bore it all on the cross.

But now the **4th saying** also shows us hell really exists & what it really is.

- you see, Calvary's cross is plain & positive proof there is a hell, because in a true sense there was actually hell on earth that day.
- for Jesus Christ suffered it when He cried: “My God, my God, why have your abandoned me?”

And that also shows us exactly what hell really is.

- that it is an eternal state of hopelessness & helplessness & remorse.
- for there the unsaved will scream unendingly in suffering: “Why? Why?”
 - “Why didn't I believe when I had chance; why didn't I love & serve Lord? Yes, why?, why?”

- & there will be no answer or relief for all eternity.

But Jesus' 4th word from the cross also teaches that hell is an eternal state of forsakenness which has to be the worst agony anyone can ever endure.

- for it is to be absolutely & forever abandoned by God with every trace of His love & care are removed.
 - & His wrath is the only reality for all eternity.
- hell then will be an existence where there is no love or life, but just endless pain & death & frustration without any relief in sight or any escape whatsoever.

And it is to that place everyone chooses to go when they refuse Jesus Christ no matter who they are--rich or poor, pagan or civilized, morally good or evil.

- it makes no difference, for, if Jesus isn't your only Lord & Savior, then you have chosen hell.
- & then you will have to suffer for your own sins, forsaken by God forever & ever.

Indeed, you see, God hates sin & takes it very seriously so that, when He found sin on Jesus, His very own Son, He punished Jesus by banishing Him from His sight.

- th'fore what makes anyone think God will never punish him or her when, at the final judgment, He sees sin is still in them because they aren't forgiven in Christ?
- for after all, if God didn't spare His own Son from death & hell on the cross so that He forsook Jesus & poured out His anger on Him for 3 hours because of our sin,--
 - then we can be absolutely sure He will not spare those who reject Him, but He will pour out His anger on them & forsake them for all eternity.
- that's what Jo.3:36 says: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, [for] God's wrath remains on him."

III. THE RELEVANT RESPONSE

And so it's extremely important how one **RESPONDS** to Jesus' **Scream of Suffering.**

- it's interesting to note that Matt.27:49 says, when crowd at the crucifixion heard this 4th word, their reaction was: "Leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah will come to save him."
- you see, face to face with sin & hell, the people turned away from Jesus in mocking indifference & blind unbelief, & didn't receive Him as Lord & Savior.

Well, what's your or my response as we hear again the cry of Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world by suffering the hellish curse of sin?

- remember again: if we forsake Him, He will forsake us forever.
- but, if we come to Calvary, confess our sins, put our faith in the crucified Christ as our sole Savior,--
 - love & serve Him only as our Lord, then we will know personally the answer to Jesus' cry: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"
 - we will know that He was forsaken to save us from the eternal God-forsakenness of hell & to give us everlasting life.

- we will know we are forgiven, freed from sin & death, & will never be forsaken by God again.

And, you know, what compassion & comfort this 4th saying also brings us in whatever situation of loneliness & despair we find ourselves.

- whether we are an abused or abandoned, unloved, unwanted child; a divorcee; a widow; a widower; a shut-in; an aged person in nursing home; one dying with an incurable, painful disease,--
- or when our home is quiet, our mailbox is empty, our days are long, our nights are sleepless, our phone is silent, our birthday is forgotten, our bed is lonely, our tomorrow is feared, our hurts never stop.

For, you see, though we know the official, theological answer why Jesus was forsaken by God: that it was to save us from sin & death & hell.

- yet, as someone says, “There is something more here. Something very compassionate [&] personal. [It has meaning for] all who cast despairing eyes toward the dark heavens & cry 'Why?' And I imagine Jesus listening. I picture His eyes misting & His pierced hand brushing away a tear. And, although he may offer no answer, although he may solve no dilemma, although the question may freeze painfully in mid-air, he, who also was once alone, understands.”
- & He will help & heal, strengthen & keep us through it all if we turn to Him in faith.
 - He will, we can be sure of it, because He personally experienced it all.
 - for He cried on the cross from the bottom of hell: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

AMEN