

Theology of Good Friday

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, March 17, 2024
PASSAGES	Matthew 27; Habakkuk 1; Romans 9; Psalm 22; Hebrews 9; John 16; 2 Corinthians 5; 1 Peter 3; John 10
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:04:54 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The most repeated picture of Good Friday — the Father turning his face away from a Son too covered in sin to look at — is not what scripture says happened. Jesus was forsaken in the sense that he was left to die, and he laid that life down himself. What atones is his death, not a rift inside God.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Habakkuk 1:13 is almost always quoted at two-thirds length. The rest of the verse is the prophet complaining that God *does* look at evil and does not intervene. It is a question, and doctrine is not built on questions.
- ◆ Quoting the first line of a psalm in Jesus' day summoned the whole psalm. Psalm 22 is not a complaint Jesus borrowed; it is a prophecy he was standing inside.
- ◆ Psalm 22:24 says God “has not hidden his face” from the afflicted one. The very song Jesus quotes is used as proof of the one thing that song denies.
- ◆ **Hebrews 9:14** has the Son offering himself “through the eternal Spirit.” Two persons of the Trinity are visibly in step; there is no reason to make the third the odd man out.
- ◆ In John 16:32 Jesus tells the disciples they will scatter — at the crucifixion — and that he will still not be alone, because the Father is with him.
- ◆ Seven times in the Gospels people try to kill Jesus and the Father shields him. This time he does not, and **John 10:18** says why: the life was laid down, not taken.

- ◆ The charge of “divine child abuse” needs abuse and a child. There is neither here — a fully grown man, eternally God, freely giving himself.
- ◆ If you believe God cannot stand to look at sin, you have nowhere to go the moment you sin. That is the practical cost of getting this wrong.

► 1:04:54

Matt opened with the karate gym he attends for fun, where the only way he gets in trouble is by going too easy on his partner. If you choke someone gently, they never learn to escape. If they drop their guard and you do not hit them, the teacher stops the class. He took it as a lesson about speaking clearly, and then spent the next forty minutes doing exactly that with a doctrine most of the room had never heard questioned.

Why Good Friday, two weeks early

► 1:10:23

Hope's series in Hebrews paused for the morning. Hope Chapel's Good Friday service is, in Matt's judgment, one of the best things the church does, and he had no interest in interrupting it to teach about it. Palm Sunday deserved its own week, Easter the week after. So the theology of Good Friday landed here.

► 1:10:51

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”

MATTHEW 27:46 ↗

There are two ways to hear that line. Either Jesus is calling Psalm 22 to mind so that everyone watching can see the prophecy unfolding in front of them — or he is telling us that the relationship between Father and Son has broken. “You might think potato, potato on that,” Matt said, “but it’s important that we in the church are really careful with our words. If anything, this is and should be our bread and butter.”

He named the cluster of ideas he wanted to test, because they always travel together: God cannot bear to look at sin; therefore the Father turned his face away; therefore Jesus was cut off from God; therefore that pain and separation is what pays for sin. It is in our books and it is in our songs — *How*

Deep the Father's Love is a genuinely good song, and it has us singing that the Father turns his face away. Away from whom? From the Son.

1. “God cannot bear to look at sin”

► 1:16:56

One verse carries this claim, and it is nearly always cut in half.

“You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?”

HABAKKUK 1:13 ↗

Read whole, it is a man in a raw place working out his own tension — *I thought you couldn't look at this, so why are you looking?* It is a complaint, not a definition. And we do not build doctrine on someone's confusion.

► 1:18:47

The rest of the Bible settles it anyway. In [Job 1](#) there is a parade of beings presenting themselves before God, and Satan is in the line. In the Gospels there is no scene where Jesus squints and turns aside because all he can hear is sin — not with Peter, not with Judas, not with the woman at the well.

► 1:20:05

Defending the claim costs more than people realize: it quietly demotes Jesus. He becomes the non-conductive rubber glove God uses to handle a gross humanity, the ten-foot pole. But Paul will not allow the distance — [Romans 9:5](#) calls the Christ who came from Israel's race “God over all, blessed forever.” Not only before the incarnation, and not only now in his glorified state. Even then, Matt said — “even then, when he let sinners touch him, wash his feet, share meals with him, spit on him.”

2. Jesus quoted the whole song

► 1:22:31

In a culture without hymn numbers, you summoned a song by its opening line — the way the Hebrew Bible names its books by their first word. The crowd at the cross knew Psalm 22 from home and from synagogue. So Matt read it aloud, slowly, and asked the room to watch for what the people standing there would have been watching for.

They are all in it. Mocked and scorned, heads wagging. “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him.” Bones out of joint, tongue stuck to the jaws, hands and feet pierced, garments divided by lot (Psalm 22:14–18). This reads less like David’s biography than like a report from the hill.

► 1:27:44

Then the psalm turns, and the turn is the whole argument.

“For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.”

PSALM 22:24 ↗

“The afflicted” there is singular in the Hebrew — one suffering man. David was scorned by men, not abandoned by God, and he knew it. If the song is more about Jesus than about David, the same holds, and harder. “Isn’t it ironic,” Matt said, “that the very song Jesus quotes is then used as proof that God did something that that very song says he doesn’t do.”

The psalm ends where the cross ends. Verse 31 closes with two Hebrew words — *he has done it* — which is a fair rendering of what Jesus says from the cross: it is finished.

3. So where was the Father?

► 1:33:37

Matt noticed something about how we tell this story: we talk as though there are two persons in God, not three. Nobody ever asks what the Spirit was doing. Hebrews answers.

“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

HEBREWS 9:13–14 ↗

Son and Spirit, in harmony, on purpose. Which would leave the Father as the odd man out — except that Jesus says otherwise, plainly, and his disciples note that he has stopped speaking in figures (John 16:28–29). In John 8:28–29 he ties it directly to the crucifixion: when you have lifted up the Son of Man, you will know that the one who sent me is with me.

► 1:35:42

“Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”

JOHN 16:32 ↗

The scattering is the crucifixion. That is the hour Jesus is talking about, and he says of that hour that the Father is with him. As for what the Father was doing there:

“in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.” Not a face pulled back. An arm reached out.

4. Then what does “forsaken” mean?

► 1:37:59

Peter says Christ suffered — and says precisely what the suffering was.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.”

1 PETER 3:18 ↗

Put to death. Not given the cold shoulder. And there is a real abandonment in the story: the Father left him there to die. Matt walked the pattern that makes it visible. Nazareth tries to throw him off a cliff and he passes through them (Luke 4:28–30). He heals on the Sabbath and they plot (Matthew 12:9–14); he heals the lame man and they seek to kill him (John 5:16–18); the crowd wonders whether he is the Christ and no one lays a hand on him (John 7:25–30); he says *before Abraham was, I am*, and they pick up stones (John 8:58–59); he says *I and the Father are one*, and they pick them up again (John 10:30–31); people believe in him and the council decides he must die (John 11:45–53). Seven times protected. Then not.

► 1:40:03

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

JOHN 10:17–18 ↗

If the Son is laying his life down and the Father swoops in to stop it, that is not harmony. The Father let him lay it down — and that, Matt argued, is the abandonment: handed over to his persecutors, on purpose, to take his life up again. Which also dissolves the accusation that the cross is divine child abuse. That charge requires abuse and a child. Jesus is God the Son at the ripe old age of eternal and, in the flesh, a grown man who chose this. “It wasn’t God who abused him. It was us who whipped him and spat on him and put thorns on his head to make fun of him.”

Why any of this matters on a Tuesday

► 1:43:16

Nothing is more foundational than the nature of God — more foundational, Matt said, than the ground we stand on, more fundamental than the laws of logic. If at the center of everything there is a Trinity whose persons had to negotiate over whether to love you, there is no floor under your feet. You could approach God, but you would never know which day you had caught him on.

So the cross is not Jesus talking the Father into loving you. It is the Father’s love being shown. There is no good-cop-bad-cop inside God, no rage held back at arm’s length until the Son goes the extra mile. He came for the sick like a physician ([Mark 2:17](#)) — for the tax collector, the traitor, the leper.

► 1:46:23

And there is the pastoral cost of the alternative. If God has a compulsive revulsion toward sinners, then the moment you sin you have nowhere to go. You wallow instead. You try to clean yourself up first, which does not work. “He should be the first one we go to when we stumble and fall,” Matt said. “And that’s why all of this matters.” He closed by praying that we would see God as he really is.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Matthew 27:46](#)
- [Psalm 22](#)
- [Habakkuk 1:13](#)
- [Job 1:6–7](#)
- [Romans 9:5](#)
- [Psalm 22:7–8](#)
- [Psalm 22:14–18](#)
- [Psalm 22:24](#)
- [Psalm 22:30–31](#)
- [Hebrews 9:13–14](#)
- [John 16:28–29](#)
- [John 8:28–29](#)
- [John 16:32](#)
- [2 Corinthians 5:18–19](#)
- [1 Peter 3:18](#)
- [Luke 4:28–30](#)
- [Matthew 12:9–14](#)
- [John 5:16–18](#)
- [John 7:25–30](#)
- [John 8:58–59](#)
- [John 10:30–31](#)
- [John 11:45–53](#)
- [John 10:17–18](#)
- [Mark 2:17](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Before this message, how did you picture the Father at the moment Jesus died? Where did that picture come from — a song, a book, a sermon?
2. Matt said we do not build doctrine on someone's questions. Where else have you seen a verse quoted at two-thirds length, and what did the missing third change?
3. Read Psalm 22 all the way through as the crowd at the cross would have known it. What do you see there that you had never connected to Good Friday?
4. If Jesus was demonstrating the Father's love rather than persuading him into it, what does that change about how you pray?
5. Where do you go the moment you stumble — toward God or away from him to clean yourself up first? What would going to him first look like this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXa0fpMSN8Y&t=3894s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.