

“Why Have You Forsaken Me?”

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, April 6, 2025
PASSAGES	Matthew 27; Psalm 22; Habakkuk 1; John 16; 2 Corinthians 5; Leviticus 17; 1 Peter 3
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:10:19 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

When Jesus cries out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” he is not reporting that the Father has turned away from him. He is quoting the opening line of a psalm that ends in confidence, and the thing he was abandoned to is death — which is what actually pays for sin.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The verse used to prove God cannot look at sin, [Habakkuk 1:13](#), says the opposite once you read the whole sentence. It is a prophet’s complaint that God is looking and has not yet acted.
- ◆ Naming a psalm by its first line was ordinary practice — Genesis was *Bereshit*, Exodus was *Shemot*. Jesus quoting Psalm 22:1 pulls the entire psalm in with it.
- ◆ Psalm 22 explicitly denies the reading built on its first verse: God “has not hidden his face” from the afflicted one.
- ◆ If the Father cut off the Son, he cut off the Spirit too — because Hebrews says Jesus offered himself “through the eternal Spirit.” The Trinity was working together at the cross, not fracturing.
- ◆ Jesus said the disciples would scatter and he would still not be alone, and he said it about the night of his arrest and death.
- ◆ The wages of sin is death, not passive aggression. Atonement runs through poured-out blood, because the life is in the blood.
- ◆ The Father had rescued Jesus from death repeatedly. That he did not do so this time was cooperation, not rejection — Jesus laid his life down on his own authority.

- ◆ This is pastoral, not academic. If you believe God recoils from sinners, you have nowhere to go at your worst moment.

► 1:10:19

Good Friday leaves Matt no room in the preaching calendar for a message on the crucifixion itself — that service belongs to seven members of the church speaking on the seven last words. So he has made it an annual tradition to take the Sunday before Palm Sunday and put it here, on one sentence Jesus said from the cross.

The sentence, and the four beliefs stacked on it

► 1:13:06

“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 ↗

A great many people hear in that line the moment the Father turned his back, and take that turning to be the punishment for sin itself — as though the wages of sin were God’s cold shoulder. Follow it through and you arrive somewhere strange: a crucifixion in which the debt is settled before Jesus dies, and his actual death becomes a redundant afterthought. “From my perspective,” Matt said, “that’s a train wreck.”

He named the four beliefs feeding it. God cannot bear to look at sin or be around sinners. The Father turned his face away from Jesus. Jesus in that moment was cut off from God. And Jesus’ emotional and relational separation from the Father is what atoned for sin. He took them one at a time.

1. God cannot look at sin

► 1:16:26

“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 ↗

Books quote the first third of that verse and stop, and they have to stop, because the rest of the sentence dismantles the point. This is a prophet in tension, asking God why he is doing the very thing Habakkuk assumed he could not do — looking on evil and not yet acting. A confused question is not a foundation for a doctrine of God's nature.

The counter-evidence is not subtle. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth — not, Matt noted dryly, concentrating on oceans, glaciers and uninhabited islands while avoiding the population centers. Jeremiah 7:11 has God saying of the temple turned into a den of robbers, "Behold, I myself have seen it." And the whole point of the exodus was proximity:

"And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them."

EXODUS 29:46 ↗

Satan himself reports among the sons of God in Job 1. And then there is every interaction Jesus ever had with anyone. "Did Jesus walk down the busy streets of any town in the Galilee area with his eyes shut and his fingers in his ears?"

The escape hatch is to make Jesus something less than God — the glove God wears to handle disgusting humanity. Matt shut that door hard: Jesus is God from God, light from light, begotten not made, and he was no less God during his earthly ministry, or there was nothing of value being sacrificed. Romans 9:5 puts it plainly — from Israel's race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, "who is God over all, blessed forever." God can look at sin. God can be friends with sinners.

2. The Father turned his face away

► 1:28:06

We know that one mostly because we sing it. Which is where discernment belongs: if the book in your hand does not say Holy Bible on the front, take it with a grain of salt and go back to the scriptures.

So go back to where Jesus got the line. Psalm 22 opens exactly where Matthew 27 does, and David is complaining bitterly to God about a desperate situation — an example, Matt said, of how open you are allowed to be about your frustrations. But the psalm keeps going. David rehearses God's track record of rescue (Psalm 22:3–5), calls himself a worm, and describes the mockery: they wag their heads and say "He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him." Then he remembers that God has held him since the womb (Psalm 22:9–11), and describes his body giving out — bones out of joint, heart like wax, tongue stuck to his jaws.

► 1:32:39

"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."

PSALM 22:16–18 ↗

That is David describing his own anguish, centuries early. Matt kept stopping to remind the room which book they were in. And then the psalm turns a corner into prophetic confidence, and says the thing the popular reading of verse 1 denies:

"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 ↗

Same move as Habakkuk: take a fragment, build a belief, and the whole passage refutes it. The psalm ends with all the ends of the earth turning to the Lord and a people yet unborn being told that he has done it (Psalm 22:27–31).

► 1:39:00

In ancient Judea you named a work by its opening words — Genesis is *Bereshit*, Exodus is *Shemot* — and you could invoke an entire psalm by quoting its first line. Matt thinks Jesus was running the whole psalm, and that the people who knew their Psalms were running it too: the gloating, the countable bones, soldiers literally casting lots for his clothes. "Am I taking crazy pills? Are we seeing something tremendous right now?"

And ask it from David's side. Did David sound relationally abandoned? He sounded hunted to the point of death, while insisting God had been near him since birth. It would be strange for Jesus to quote a psalm to mean something its author never meant.

3. Jesus was cut off from God

► 1:39:38

Start with the member of the Trinity nobody mentions in this argument. Where was the Spirit?

"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 9:14 ↗

At the cross the Son and the Spirit are plainly cooperating. For the Father to cut off the Son he would have to cut off the Spirit as well, which makes no sense because it is not what is happening.

"I and the Father are one" was not a claim about most days. In [John 8:28–29](#) Jesus ties it directly to being lifted up: "the one who sent me is with me."

If that sounds too cryptic to lean on, John 16 hands us the moment the disciples themselves say he has finally dropped the figures of speech and is talking plainly. Here is what he says once everyone is on the same page:

"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 not during the miracles and the crowds. It is the arrest, the trial and the death — and that is precisely where he says he is not alone. As for what the Father was occupied with while the most beautiful sight in the universe was in front of him:

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18–19 ↗

Not a turning away. An aggressive pursuit of the lost and the broken.

4. So what actually atoned for sin

► 1:47:00

If Jesus was not suffering divine passive aggression on our behalf, what was he suffering? Peter answers it:

[Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, "being put to death i](#)

Death, because the wages of sin is death — the Greek, Matt pointed out, does not say passive aggression.

Why death, though? One of his favorite verses, buried in a book most people never finish:

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."

LEVITICUS 17:11 ↗

What was in Jesus' blood was his life. Pouring it out was not the price of a transaction so much as a transfusion — he was giving us what was in it.

Which leaves the word *forsaken* with real content: he was abandoned to death. And even that was a gift the Father cooperated in. Matt ran the list of times it did not happen — Nazareth wanting to throw him off a cliff in Luke 4, the plotting after the Sabbath healings in Matthew 12 and John 5, four separate attempts across John 7, the stones picked up in John 10:31–39. Every time, the Father protected him. So why not now?

"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."

JOHN 10:17–18 ↗

It would have been strange for the Father to interrupt the one thing his Son had come to do on purpose. Which also disposes of the divine-child-abuse charge: there is no child here, Jesus being a grown man of eternal age, and the centurions were never the ones in control.

That reframes "It is finished." Isaiah says of the servant that he poured out his soul to death — death is where it culminates. Jesus is not announcing that the bill is settled and he may as well die now anyway. He is speaking proleptically, of a thing so imminent it is already true, and saying it before he dies so that no one can later claim he never really died.

Why it matters on a Tuesday

► 1:50:40

Matt closed pastorally, and this is the reason he keeps preaching it. If you believe the wages of sin is a cold shoulder — that God's instinctive response to your sin and brokenness is to turn away — then when

you are at your most broken, you have nowhere to go. You can conjure his rage against you easily enough. Where do you turn? Stuck in the addictive, destructive power of sin, he is the first person you should go to.

"Jesus was not convincing the Father to love us by his death. He was demonstrating the Father's love in his death."

He would not have us imagine a Father talked round at the last minute — as if, after the incarnation and everything that followed, God said, *well, if you're going to do all that, I guess I'll love these disgusting people. Just for you.* Jesus does not coerce the Father's love. He displays it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- [Matthew 27:46](#)
- [Habakkuk 1:13](#)
- [2 Chronicles 16:9](#)
- [Jeremiah 7:11](#)
- [Exodus 29:46](#)
- [Job 1:6](#)
- [Romans 9:5](#)
- [Psalm 22:3–5](#)
- [Psalm 22:9–11](#)
- [Psalm 22:16–18](#)
- [Psalm 22:24](#)
- [Psalm 22:27–31](#)
- [Hebrews 9:14](#)
- [John 10:30](#)
- [John 8:28–29](#)
- [John 16:32](#)
- [2 Corinthians 5:18–19](#)
- [1 Peter 3:18](#)
- [Romans 6:23](#)
- [Leviticus 17:11](#)
- [Luke 4:29](#)
- [Matthew 12:14](#)
- [John 5:18](#)
- [John 7:19–44](#)
- [John 10:31–39](#)
- [John 10:17–18](#)
- [Isaiah 53:12](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where did you first pick up the idea that the Father turned his face away — a song, a sermon, a book? What made it feel true?
2. Matt showed two verses that get quoted a third of the way through. What guards you from building a belief on a fragment?
3. Read Psalm 22 aloud all the way to verse 31. What changes when you hear verse 1 as the opening of that, rather than as a standalone cry?
4. If the wages of sin is death rather than God's cold shoulder, what does that do to how you picture God's face when you sin?
5. Where have you been avoiding God because you assumed he could not stand to be near you — and 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=RAC4J81lyX4&t=4219s>

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.