# Jesus, the Son of God Forsaken

*Despised by men, never by God – and what that means when you suffer*

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| SPEAKER | Matt Ryniker |
| DATE | Sunday, March 29, 2020 |
| PASSAGES | Mark 15:34; Psalm 22; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Isaiah 49:1-8; John 10:17-18; Hebrews 9:14; John 16:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:19-20 |
| MESSAGE | Begins at 0:00:00 in the service |

### THE BIG IDEA

Jesus' cry from the cross quotes Psalm 22, a song about a righteous sufferer despised by men and vindicated by God. He was forsaken to a real and painful death, but the Father, Son and Spirit were never at odds: the Father loved the Son for laying down his life. Christ's blood was not shed to change the Father's heart toward us – it was shed because of it.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Gospel writers keep Jesus' Aramaic words – "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" – so we will hear that he is quoting the first line of a psalm, and read the whole of it.
- Jesus was abandoned in the sense that the Father let wicked men kill him. Matt argued he was not abandoned in the sense of a broken relationship.
- Rightly offered sacrifice was always "a pleasing aroma to the Lord." The cross was not an ugly shame but the most beautiful act of love in history.
- Psalm 22 and Isaiah's servant songs describe one who is rejected by people but honored by God – and whose suffering reaches the nations.
- The Spirit offered Christ to God on the cross, and the Father was "in Christ reconciling the world to himself." The Trinity was in perfect harmony.

- Suffering is not proof that you have lost God's favor. The priority in suffering is to remain faithful to the end, as Christ did.
- Repent of picturing the Father as harsh and the Son as holding him back. The cross is God's final word on how he feels about humanity.

▶ 0:02:35

Matt preached from home, on a livestream, early in the coronavirus shutdown; his wife Mandy was working with Covid patients. He enjoyed the live chat, he said, but would never prefer it. Paul longed to see the Romans in person to strengthen them (Romans 1:11); physical presence is not a non-issue, and it is fine to mourn its loss.

## Instead of Good Friday

▶ 0:04:37

Hope's long-standing Good Friday service had been cancelled, so Matt gave this Sunday to its theme, admitting it would be "a lousy replacement." He paused first to pray for hospital workers and first responders, "helping society in a way that cannot be social distanced."

▶ 0:05:39

> "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"
>
> MARK 15:34 ↗

The Gospel writers do not transliterate everything Jesus said. They do it here, Matt argued, because they want us to know he is quoting Psalm 22:1.

## In what way was he forsaken?

▶ 0:07:48

Forsaken means abandoned. If that means the Father did nothing to stop the crucifixion, Matt said, the evidence is overwhelming. If it means the Father willed it and was pleased by it for specific reasons, he affirmed that too. But there is a more modern idea: that the Father severed the relationship, even briefly, and left the Son to die alone, crying out to a Father who would not listen. That second sense, Matt said, is the problem.

▶ 0:09:29

Isaiah makes plain that the servant was rejected by us, not by God. Everyone else deserted Jesus, and Jesus said the Father was with him. Start with his own words:

> "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 ↗

The laying down of his life is one of the things the Father loves about the Son. They were on the same page about the mission. He then set out three lines of argument.

## 1. Right sacrifice pleases God

▶ 0:13:44

After the flood Noah's offering was "a pleasing aroma" to the Lord (Genesis 8:21), and that motif runs through Scripture. John the Baptist called Jesus
"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"; the sacrificial system foreshadowed his offering. And Jesus said,
"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." "The cross was not an ugly shame in any sense," Matt said, "but it was the most beautiful act of love in all of history."

▶ 0:14:35

Unfaithful worship, by contrast, disgusted God even when the animal was right (Hosea 8; Malachi 1). Jesus was faithful to the end: from the cross he also quoted Psalm 31:5, "Into your hand I commit my spirit," a psalm whose writer stays faithful to the last.

## 2. The righteous sufferer of the Psalms and Isaiah

▶ 0:16:04

We tend to read Old Testament quotations atomistically, Matt said – a single thought cut loose from its context. So he read the psalm aloud.

> "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel."
>
> PSALM 22:1–3 ↗

Notice the turn, Matt said: an unfiltered cry, then a turn to God's holiness and his faithfulness to the fathers. It is a model for how to pray when we suffer.

▶ 0:18:58

Jews in the century before the New Testament used the psalms often in worship, so many who heard Jesus quote the first line would have known the whole song – and then watched it unfold in front of them:

> "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 ↗

▶ 0:20:42

The bulls, lions and dogs are treacherous men. The psalmist's suffering is not a severance from God but violence from people who want him dead. And then:

> "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 ↗

Matt read it without the pronouns: God has not despised the afflicted one, and God has not hidden his face from him. If Jesus is the true afflicted one, that applies to him. Then the psalm widens to the plural and to "all the families of the nations," ending with a message for "a people yet unborn, that he has done it."

▶ 0:24:59

Isaiah's servant songs carry the same shape. In Isaiah 49 the servant is honored in the Lord's eyes yet "deeply despised, abhorred by the nation," given as a light to the nations and "as a covenant to the people," and sent to say to the prisoners, "Come out." In Isaiah 52:13–15 he is high and lifted up –

language John ties to the crucifixion – his appearance marred beyond human likeness, and he will "sprinkle many nations," as priests sprinkled blood to sanctify the altar.

▶ 0:29:36

> "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. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."
>
> ISAIAH 53:4–6 ↗

Despised by whom? "His fellow men." We all went astray; he did not.

▶ 0:31:55

"Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him" (Isaiah 53:10–12). Why would that please God? Because in the crushing, not in spite of it, the nations are purchased and sprinkled with his blood. And "he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days" – how, if he is dead, unless this foreshadows resurrection? Because he poured out his soul to death, God gives him a portion with the great – just what Jesus said about laying down his life.

▶ 0:33:59

After Isaiah's plea for mercy comes
"Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence."
For anyone steeped in these songs, the cross would have been overwhelming: the pierced hands and feet, the lots cast for his clothes, the jeering – then an earthquake and the temple veil torn. Here was the vindicated righteous sufferer, despised by men but not by God.

▶ 0:35:50

The same David who wrote Psalm 22 wrote Psalm 23: "I will fear no evil, for you are with me." Matt's summary: a righteous figure suffers, despised by people but not by God; he is vindicated by God, not by people – "we would never want to reverse those"; through his suffering the whole earth acknowledges Israel's God as king; and his saving acts are told to generations to come. Paul packs it into one sentence before Agrippa: "that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22–23).

## 3. The Trinity at the cross

▶ 0:38:20

If the Father and Son were at odds on the cross, Matt asked, where was the Spirit – "awkwardly in the other room waiting for it all to blow over"? 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 9:14 ↗

▶ 0:39:33

Jesus said "I and the Father are one," and of his crucifixion, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man… The one who sent me is with me" (John 8:28–29). On the night before he died he was even more specific:

> "A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me."
>
> JOHN 16:32 ↗

▶ 0:41:36

So where was the Father? "Closer than Mary, closer than the centurion, closer than the men crucified on either side of him": "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." There was "absolute harmony of purpose" and "absolute relational harmony."

> "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."
>
> COLOSSIANS 1:19–20 ↗

▶ 0:42:50

Jesus was abandoned, then, in a real sense: men had tried to kill him before and the Father always rescued him – he slipped through crowds, his enemies were made afraid. This time the Father let it happen. That was not a severance. It was the moment Jesus laid down his life by his own authority, the charge he had received, and the reason the Father loved him.

## What this means for us

▶ 0:44:17

**Be one of the purchased nations.** If you do not yet believe, or have not been baptized, trust in Christ – "don't trust in your trust; trust in Christ" – and be baptized.

▶ 0:44:53

**Suffering is not proof that you lack God's favor.** The servant had God's favor and still suffered, and early Christians saw their own suffering for doing right as walking in his steps. So drop the idea that if God loved you, your life would be comfortable, healthy and wealthy. You can be suffering and not cut off from God. Christ was abandoned to physical death, not relationally.

▶ 0:46:52

Matt slowed down for this: "A lot of people think that Christ's blood was shed to change the Father's heart towards you. That's false. Christ's blood was shed because of the Father's heart towards you." Many of us carry a default picture of a Father who would dispense with us if it were convenient, with only the Son holding him back – so when marriage, work, health or family get hard, it seems to confirm it. False. God is with you in the suffering, and one day he will wipe away every tear. Until then, the top priority is not escaping suffering as fast as possible but remaining faithful to the end, as Christ did.

▶ 0:48:02

**Repent of robbing the Father of credit.** He is as tender and caring as the Son and the Spirit. It is no accident, Matt said, that the fruitless servant in the parable of the talents was the one who called his master harsh and buried his talent out of fear (Matthew 25:24–25). Nobody becomes fruitful serving a master they think is cruel. We love because he first loved us.

▶ 0:50:48

Some of us, he suspected, secretly picture a Father who enjoys crushing "dirty rotten little sinners," like a home where one parent shields the kids from the other. No. The crushing pleased God because of the purchase and sprinkling of the nations. "The cross of Christ is God's final word on how he feels about humanity. His love is burning white hot. It's not passive-aggressive." He has gone all in, and he will not undo the cross. If your life is full of hardship, that does not mean God has abandoned you. "He loves you madly, and if you don't see it now, there will be a day when you see it clearly."

▶ 0:52:28

Matt prayed that God would help the church repent of "odd thoughts about you," and invited anyone who wanted prophetic encouragement from Hope's prayer team to sign up. Geno, closing, added the

line he had taken from it: God abandoned his servant to the suffering, but not relationally – “and it’s not even close to the same thing.”

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

### SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Romans 1:11
- Mark 15:34
- Psalm 22:1
- John 10:17–18
- Genesis 8:21
- John 1:29
- John 15:13
- Hosea 8
- Malachi 1
- Psalm 31:5
- Psalm 22:1–3
- Psalm 22:16–18
- Psalm 22:24
- Isaiah 49:1–8
- Isaiah 52:13–15
- Isaiah 53:4–6
- Isaiah 53:10–12
- Isaiah 64:1
- Psalm 23:4
- Acts 26:22–23
- Hebrews 9:14
- John 10:30
- John 8:28–29
- John 16:32
- 2 Corinthians 5:19
- Colossians 1:19–20
- Revelation 21:4
- Matthew 25:24–25
- 1 John 4:19

### FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. What picture of the cross did you grow up with – a Father turning away, or a Father in Christ reconciling the world? How has it shaped your prayers?
2. Psalm 22 moves from an unfiltered cry to remembering God's holiness and faithfulness. What would it look like to pray that way about something you are carrying?
3. Matt said the servant was despised by men but not by God. Why does it matter that we never reverse those?
4. When you suffer, what do you tend to conclude about God's heart toward you, and what in this message pushes back on that?
5. "Christ's blood was shed because of the Father's heart towards you." How would living from that change the way you serve 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=R5sxp03-0Xk&t=0s

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.