

**Foundations: From the Cross 5**  
***My God, Why?***  
**Mark 15:25-34 (AFBC 3/11/18)**

This morning, we come to Jesus' fifth word from the cross. I suggested to you last week that Jesus' fourth word, "I'm thirsty," is likely the most *neglected* of His seven statements. This week's statement, it seems to me, is the most... *avoided*.

For good reason--the fifth word is troubling. It takes us places we would rather not go. It raises concerns that we may prefer to just not think about. Still, Jesus spoke these words from the pulpit of the cross; so we must try, at least, to understand them.

Our text is found in **Mark 15:25-34: It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.** <sup>26</sup> **The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.** <sup>27</sup> **They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left.**

<sup>29</sup> **Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup> come down from the cross and save yourself!"** <sup>31</sup> **In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! <sup>32</sup> Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.**

<sup>33</sup> **At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.** <sup>34</sup> **And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").**

There are passages of Scripture that seem crystal clear. Their meaning is obvious. Their application—relating the words to our lives—doesn't seem so problematic.

We're drawn to these texts. We like them better. They're the ones we commit to memory, and refer to in times of meditation and devotion. They're those Biblical jewels that... inspire us!

But none of this describes the text before us today. We're more likely to try to avoid this passage. These words are disturbing—confusing—perhaps the most perplexing words in the whole Bible: **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

It's not so much the words themselves that trouble us. We have likely heard such fears and concerns expressed. Perhaps we've even experienced dark moments when we felt... "God-forsaken."

So that's not the problem. The thing that's so difficult about these words is *who* it is that says them. It's Jesus!—the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior!

This, friends, is the only person who ever lived the perfect life—a life completely free from sin; life lived in total harmony with God's will and in complete fellowship with His Spirit.

Jesus Christ says, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Admit it—these words disturb us. They may frighten us. We're not sure what to make of the fact that *Jesus* felt... "God-forsaken!"

Isn't this what really concerns us? Yet here they are—part of God's word to us. We have no good option but to deal with them.

Let's try something. Let's try to make sense of these words by taking them just one phrase at a time.

**1.** We'll begin with the phrase, **"My God."** It's a good place to start because... it's the simplest. "My God."

If this were the end of it, Jesus' words wouldn't be so troublesome. We're all familiar with this phrase. Lots of folks who aren't religious use it—in an "OMG" kind of way.

Right? We hear this all the time—too much, in fact. God's name often gets abused—or "used in vain"—as the Bible puts it.

But when spoken reverently, when used with respect, these are actually words of relationship. This is how Jesus uses them here. When He says "My God," it's a reference to, and a recognition of, His personal relationship with the Heavenly Father.

This is one of the amazing truths of the Christian gospel—that the God of Creation, the infinite, all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful Ruler of the Universe, loves and cares for us... and He invites us to enter into a personal relationship with Him!

The Apostle Paul had a good handle on this. How often he would use this phrase in his letters: “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19)

Paul began his letter to the Romans by saying, “I thank ‘my God’ through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.” (Romans 1:8)

What a wonderful privilege to have a personal relationship with God, and to be able to say by faith--with awe, respect, and reverence in our hearts--“My God.”

Of course, we do need to be careful with this. We must take care when using that little possessive pronoun, “my.” It’s not about possession here, but relationship.

How often I’ve heard people say something like, “Well, MY Bible says...” as if they personally owned the Scriptures along with the only possible interpretation of them! I’m sorry, but I believe a bit more humility is called for when referring to God and His word.

“My God” is not a statement of possession. You and I do not and never will possess God. He, on the other hand, whether or not we acknowledge this, does possess us--completely—and because of His abundant love and mercy, we should be thankful He does.

“My God”... is a statement of the relationship we enter into when we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is only in and through Christ that Paul or any of us can say, “My God.”

Let’s think about this in a different way. Let’s say there’s some famous person that you really like. Maybe they’re in the entertainment world, or they’re a great athlete, or perhaps a business or government leader. Whoever it is, though, he or she is far removed from your world.

So, is there any chance at all that you could ever meet and even become friends with this famous person? You say that's not likely to happen—true—yet, it's at least within the realm of possibility. How could this ever come about?

Well, here's one way. Somebody you know, who somehow also happens to know this famous person, could arrange for the two of you to meet. They could introduce you.

Here's the point. As Christians, we have come to know God in a similar way. We've been introduced to God by One who knows Him well. Our meeting was made possible by the One who calls us His friends while also being—personally--"one with God."

Jesus came here among us in order to introduce us to the Father. We meet God by entering into relationship with His Son. Jesus told us He is the way to God--that we come to the Father through Him.

Jesus introduces us to the Father in such a way that we can then say, "My God—my Lord, and my God." That's relationship—close, personal, life-changing relationship: "My God."

**2.** Let's turn our attention now to the second phrase—it's just a word really—a small word, yet it can land a big punch—I'm talking about the word "**Why.**"

Jesus said, "My God... **why?**" This, friends, is where His fifth saying from the cross gets tough—when Jesus asks, "Why?"

"Why" questions are difficult. Maybe this is the reason some are so insistent that we should never ask why—don't you think?

Most of us have been with friends or loved ones in those dark moments of life when there are so many questions and seemingly no answers, at least not any that we're able to give.

As a young youth minister, I sat at the hospital with the parents of a dying 19-year-old boy and struggled with them to make sense of what was happening in their family. They wanted to know why.

Later, I was called to the hospital room of an attractive, intelligent, middle-aged woman whose successful husband had beaten her

once again—this time, breaking her jaw--so she could no longer deny his abusive behavior. She wanted to know “why?”

I went to a Delivery Room to comfort the parents of a child they desperately wanted--but he came too soon. The father sat silently over in the corner of the room, while his wife, still holding her baby, just kept sobbing, and asking, Why?”

I’ve been with some of you when all you wanted to know in your moment of anguish was... “Why?”

Is it wrong to ask why? No, I don’t think so. Instead, I believe it’s one of the most human things we can do. The rest of God’s creatures don’t have this capacity—but we do.

It should serve as a corrective to every person who views all questioning of God as sinful... that, from the cross, Jesus asked, “My God, why?”

Jesus was Divine—yes--but He was also human. In taking on our humanity, He also took on some limitations. As Paul described this, “He who was rich was willing to become poor for our sake, so that we, through His poverty, might become rich” (II Cor. 8:9).

Part of taking on our humanity was Jesus subjecting Himself to the questions--the inner struggles--that come when we suffer.

The Bible is very up front about this. It acknowledges the fact that we all have questions. We see this in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm. When Jesus said, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” He was actually quoting the first words of this Psalm.

Psalm 22—strategically located just before the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm (The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...)--the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm is called a prayer of complaint. These Psalms were often quoted by the Hebrew people in times of adversity.

These are painful words; but they demonstrate faith even in the midst of heartbreak. They’re so “honest to God”—and God wouldn’t have us be any other way than honest. He already knows what we’re feeling anyway, so why not be honest?

Jesus is quoting from the Psalms when He asks "Why?": "My God, why have you forsaken me?" But Jesus does this in the context of an abiding trust in the Father. Our Heavenly Father has answers to life's mysteries even when we don't.

There's an old gospel song that says, "We will understand it better by and by." Sometimes, friends, that's all we have to hang on to when we find ourselves asking, **"Why?"**

**3.** Now with the time remaining, let's consider the last phrase of this question, **"Why... have you forsaken me?"**

Keep in mind what Jesus had endured. He suffered the betrayals and desertions of His friends and followers. He was pummeled with the hatred and malice of his enemies. He was physically abused--first, through beatings, and finally, crucifixion.

There was, however, one experience—and it's a universal human experience—but Jesus had never endured it until this moment. Jesus had never known, nor felt the consequences of, sin... until He took my sin and yours upon Himself at Calvary.

**"He who knew no sin became sin for us." (II Cor. 5:21)** And sin does one thing—one terrible, deadly thing. Sin separates us from God. Before it's done, sin always leaves us feeling God-forsaken, which is the ultimate death.

Jesus... had to experience this. This may go deeper than we want to go, but without this sense of separation from God, Jesus would not have suffered the full consequences of sin.

In these final moments of His life, however, Jesus knew the utter despair of lostness. Our sins—mine, yours, and the world's—all our sins placed on Jesus as if they were His own, destroyed that intimate relationship that He had always known with the Father.

And in this awful moment, for the first time since before time began, the Son of God was lost--separated from the Father. In that awful moment, Jesus... was God-forsaken.

This is the high price that must be paid for sin—lostness, separation from God, spiritual death. This is life’s ultimate tragedy—the worst that can happen.

But here’s the Gospel: since Jesus took our sin upon Himself, because He was willing, by way of the cross, to experience the full deadly consequences of our sin, you and I don’t have to.

For those few moments, the Heavenly Father turned His back on the Son He so dearly loved, so that in Him, and through Him, you and I might become the Sons and Daughters of God.

This seems like another good place to ask “why?”--doesn’t it? Why would God do this? Again, we don’t have all the answers.

But the Bible makes it clear enough that the reason God did this was love—a Divine love for each one of us, and the desire to destroy that sin-barrier between us. In Christ Jesus, God set us free from the power of sin and death and gave us His gift of life.

A final observation: I guess it says a lot about us that it rarely occurs to most of us to ask “why” when good things come our way—when we feel so blessed—or even when we hear this Gospel of the God who loves us so much He gave us His only Son.

Friends, maybe *this* is really when we *should* be asking why. But it’s only in those desperate moments, when our world is falling apart, that we insist on knowing “why?”

When those times come—and they will—know that our Lord understands. In agony upon the cross, separated from the Father by the sins of the world He’d taken upon Himself, Jesus cried out, “My God, why...why have you forsaken me?”

If even Jesus went through this, it’s likely there will be times when you and I hurt so badly, and feel so lost, that we may think God has forsaken us. He hasn’t. This gracious and loving God that we’ve come to know in Christ Jesus is not about to forget us.

Maybe we can’t always find *Him*, but He always knows where we are. He has a firm and steady grip on our lives; and we have it on the authority of His word... that He will never, ever... let us go!