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Good Friday 2020

The perfect murder thought of everything. Nothing was left for our victim tonight, not even the dignity of clothing. All that was abandoned was Jesus himself. As we connect to Psalm 22, we must acknowledge feelings of abandonment. Because our Lord had them.

A word study on “forsaken” in the N.T. reveals that more often this word is used to speak of “NOT being forsaken”, the other moment is when Paul is deserted by all; even his friends. The only other moment in Scripture is referring to the Lord leaving descendants for the rescue of Israel.

Yet Jesus asked with the Psalmist: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”. This is not a church question deemed appropriate in our past, perhaps even now. Even if only Jesus had said “My God, My God, WHY?” this would not be a question that would delight parents to have their child scream at the minister. The why question is often seen as argumentative, faithless, impossible; the troublemaker in the room.

But in our Bible, in verses often bypassed, we hear Job question and weep along with Jeremiah, the Psalmist is abandoned, and Jesus screams out: “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY?”

Words faintly leaving his body, ripped apart by the mob and nails and thorns. He barely has breath to question this treatment, to challenge this moment, to even ask “WHY”?

Are we simply to bypass this moment of abandonment with the same carelessness of Job’s friends? Are we to ignore the ocean of tears in the same way we do the prophet Jeremiah? Or shall we explain away the difficult Psalms that weep as the very forsaken?

See, there Jesus is. Asking what we have all been asking. Do we have the courage to wait, listen, and ask alongside his bleeding body, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

We must acknowledge abandonment because our Lord experienced it, but also because we experience it. I remember being abandoned. It is something you would not wish on your worst enemy. To lose your entire family overnight...? Most Christians could not handle my angry prayers at that time. These prayers were not “church appropriate.” The anger and the fear finally quieted, but my comfort was not in denying my abandonment, but acknowledging it. A truth that I found in our tradition: that we can name the hard things. That injustices can be challenged at the cross and in our canon and that, there is a place for the abandoned and angry. There is a place for the questioning, abandoned, suffering to scream “why?”

In addition, this unanswered question must echo in our souls even now, as our comforts are being stripped away because it took a paused economy for Mother Earth to breathe, a living wage to be acknowledged, our families prioritized, and a commitment to the hungry. Dare we let Jesus ask the oppressed question of us on Good Friday?

My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

My God, My God, Why?

My God, My God.

My God.

We watch him suffer on the news, in the streets, at the checkout, in the parade, and tucked away at Mass. However, we have done our job, written our check, turned in our bag, called our lists, and retweeted our favorite quote. We have supported our troops and cheered for our front line workers, prayed for our essential workers, planted our seeds, and given our cards. We have listened to the experts and our leaders. We share the Good News; we champion the Good, and unify our communities for positive change and growth.

But has the reality become dull to our ears? There is a screaming question. A question, dare we say, asked of us. Somewhere, finally, the oppressed are screaming for actual attention. Jesus asks, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"