

Well, this Easter (Easter 2020), is going to be an Easter that we never forget...

I always tell people, if you're going to visit St George, come at Easter. It is the best time... It's the perfect season for us – it's still warm enough to go for a swim or a ski, but it's not ridiculously hot... Often around Easter, you'll see white fields of cotton, ready for picking... Not too hot. Not too cold... Beautiful...

But this year, we're not allowed to go anywhere, or do anything... We had visitors coming this Easter. Not any more...

We will remember this Easter...

I think the thing that's going to knock me about most this year, is:

- Easter time (in the Christian Church), is a time for fellowship.
- It's a time for meeting together / worshipping .
- It's a time for being together, as we remember with sadness, the death of Jesus (upon the cross)..
- It's a time to be sad together,,,,

- But it's also a time of shared hope, as we look to the future, and as we share in the joy, of Resurrection Sunday – A joint collective fellowship, of celebration, where together we proclaim: – **Jesus is alive!!!**

That's what I'm going to miss. And that's what I'm going to remember about this Easter... The loneliness... The absence of personal fellowship...

And I've been thinking about this: As disciples of Jesus, we usually connect, in a similar way, as the **original** Disciples of Jesus did on that terrible day... After the crucifixion of Jesus, they came together, behind those closed, locked doors... They found comfort in the presence of each other...

And in normal times, that's what we would do...

And as I've reflected on this, I believe this Good Friday (today), is an opportunity for us to connect with what it was like for **Jesus**... As one by one, all of His disciples deserted Him... And except for a few women, as He hung up on that cross, although he was surrounded by His enemies, He was all alone...

Matthew 27: 46, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?", "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

What was the cost of our salvation???

- Usually, we consider the physical pain.
- Last year, as we studied the Gospel of Mark, we could see that Mark highlighted the **humiliation** of the Cross – The Lord God Almighty, humiliated by His own creation...

- This year, I think I'm going to capture some of the emotional pain of desertion and loneliness (at the time of His greatest need)...

They deserted Him in the Garden. Rhonda: Matthew 26:36-56

Peter deserted Him at the courtyard of the High Priest: Matthew 26:69-75

He was deserted by the whole of Israel, when they chose Barabbas over Jesus: Matthew 27:15-22.

And then He was crucified: Matthew 27:32-44.

And as He died, it **seemed** like **God** had deserted Him – He hadn't,, but it had every appearance that He had...
Matthew 27:45-54

And at His death, where were the men? Nowhere to be seen... And even the women, looked on from a distance..
Matthew 27:55-61

And so we get the image of Jesus Christ, all alone on the cross... But not everything was as it seemed.

And we need to hear this, because some people are feeling really alone (right now)... But not everything is as it seems...

I usually try to give something new each and every year, but I believe this is really important for me to share this again (I only said it last year):

Just before He died, what did Jesus cry out???

"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

It was a cry of utter despair...

Now, today, it's "common evangelical theology" to say "Because at that point, Jesus was loaded with all the sins of humanity, God couldn't bear to look at Him..."

But I want you to note: Nowhere do the scriptures say that... It **may** be true... I sorta suspect not, because God looks upon all sinners, and He loves them...

But one thing I do know, is that very common explanation often prevents us from digging into our Old Testaments, to see what it really means...

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is the first line of Ps 22???. It's a Psalm that begins in despair, but it ends in triumph...

It begins, with the feeling that God has abandoned Him, but by the end, we realise that things are not at all as they seem... The Psalmist **isn't** abandoned by God... The Psalmist **continues** to have faith that God will hear him, and he **will** be rescued from death, even if he dies first...

Righto:

Today, if we want to point someone to a certain passage of Scripture, we quote book/chapter/verse (Psalms 22:1-31)... And that's very convenient, but I understand it was only in the 1300's when they began adding chapters (to help find their way around).

How did they used to guide someone to a certain passage of Scripture before that? Or more specifically, how would they guide someone to a specific psalm???

Let me give you a hint:

- Australians all let us rejoice... (advance Australia fair)
- Once a jolly Swagman... (Waltzing matilda)
- Well, he's lookin' kinda jaded,
and his sight is not the best... (Leave Him in the Long Yard) (Slim Dusty / Lee Kernegan)

Alright, the way you'd point somebody to a particular psalm, is you'd quote the first line...

And as Jesus hung on the cross, to those around Him, it **seemed** that God had deserted Him... and Jesus says: "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" – He's pointing us to Psalm 22. How about we read it...

Why Have You Forsaken Me?

22 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE DOE OF THE DAWN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- ¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?
- ² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.
- ³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- ⁴ In you our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
- ⁵ To you they cried and were rescued;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
- ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the people.
- ⁷ All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;
- ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"
- ⁹ Yet you are he who took me from the womb;
you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.
- ¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth,

and from my mother's womb you have been my
God.

- ¹¹ Be not far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.
- ¹² Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
- ¹³ they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.
- ¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
- ¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
- ¹⁶ For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet—
- ¹⁷ I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;
- ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.
- ¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far off!
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!
- ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,

my precious life from the power of the dog!

²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!

You have rescued me from the horns of the wild
oxen!

²² I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise
you:

²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of
Israel!

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great
congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear
him.

²⁶ The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!
May your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.

²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD,

and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the
dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.

³⁰ Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming
generation;

³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to
a people yet unborn,
that he has done it.

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Wow!!!!

It's like Jesus is saying, "You want me to prophecy? The prophecy's already been made – I'm fulfilling it." "Psalm 22 was written 1000 years ago, and now I'm fulfilling it."

It **looked** like God had deserted Him, but He hadn't. This was God's purpose for Jesus, all along...

The crucifixion gives the appearance of despair, but it ends in triumph... It gives the appearance that God had deserted Him, but He hadn't...

And this Easter, you might feel alone. Your feelings are wrong. You are **not** alone ... God is with us... And we're going to talk more about that on Resurrection Sunday...

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,
We want to thank You for Jesus Christ (Our Lord and our Saviour).

We thank You, for Your plan of the ages,
That Your precious Son would suffer and die,
That we might have life...

Lord, perhaps this year, we might grasp the loneliness and abandonment that Jesus felt on the cross...

But Lord, we thank You, that things were **not** as they appeared.

We thank You, that You hadn't abandoned Him,
But that you raised Him up in glory (on the 3rd day).

And Lord, we thank You, that You are with us...
Even when we feel alone, You are with us...

Lord, at this time, where other human contact is more distant,
Draw near to us, we pray...

Lord, we delight in Your presence;
And we thank You, for the sacrifice;
And the resurrection of Jesus,
that made this relationship possible.

To You be all glory.

And Lord, today, we shift our focus from ourselves,
And we worship You...

And the people all said:
Amen.