

Mark 15:33-41; Psalm 22; Forsaken on the Cross I. What Forsaken Means II. Who was Forsaken III. Why He was Forsaken

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this morning we come to the 4th saying of Jesus on the cross where we hear Jesus cry out- being forsaken. Thus far, Jesus has prayed for forgiveness for others, promised paradise to a thief, and provided a home for His family. This week, we center in on what is likely the greatest display of suffering on the cross- and even great words of mystery. How can the Son, who is one with the Father, be forsaken? Now an example of an earthly parent forsaking their child is not hard to find. As I mentioned last week, there was a mother in NYC who abandoned her 4-year-old daughter on the streets. But why would a mother do that? Well, it may be simply a pure act of evil- the mother may be selfish or annoyed or even addicted to drugs. Perhaps this parent was afflicted by mental illness. So there can be many different reasons why a parent would abandon their child- but all of those reasons are not good. Is there ever a good reason for a parent to abandon their child? How about this- did the heavenly Father have a good reason to forsake His Son on the cross? Well, today we consider this 4th saying on the cross- My God, why have you forsaken me. Our text is v. 34 and our theme is this: Jesus Christ is forsaken by the Father so that His people might never be forsaken.

I. What Forsaken Means

In our first point we consider what it means to be forsaken. When Jesus said that He was forsaken by God- what did He mean? V. 34 is one of the few times in the NT where we read the actual words of Jesus transcribed in the language they were spoken. As you know, the OT was primarily written in Hebrew and the NT was written in Greek. But here we read the word in the language that Jesus actually spoke- which is Galilean Aramaic. Another example of this double recording is found in Mark 5 where Jesus said- “Talitha Cumi” in the Aramaic- or “little girl, get up” in English. Here in Luke 15, we find another example of Jesus own words recorded. In Aramaic we read- “sabachthani”; which is then translated into the Greek word “Egkatelipes.” For our English ears we find the word- forsaken. Why have you forsaken? Now when we say

something is forsaken- we usually mean that something has been neglected due to its being ignored. An old, forsaken farmhouse falls into disrepair due to lack of upkeep and care. So objects can be forsaken simply by being neglected and ignored. But here, when Jesus says that He has been forsaken, He is stating that God is actively doing something. Jesus is not being forgotten due to ignorance- he is not being overlooked because God was absent minded. Not at all, rather to be forsaken here is to be turned away from, deserted, and isolated. Both the Aramaic and Greek word used bring to mind abandonment. Jesus is all alone here- left to suffer by Himself. Not forgotten, but forsaken! There is none to help- and there is no aid! When God blesses someone, the Bible illustrates that blessing by saying God's face was shining upon them. But for Jesus- it is as if God was hiding his face- turning and walking away. Instead of being happy with and pleased- instead of smiling on Jesus- God was pouring out His displeasure- frowning upon Him. Jesus is being left alone- it is as if heaven had become bronze- the communication was closed. When God was called upon- there was no answer given. There was no aid, comfort or affirmation received! To be forsaken was much worse than any physical pain Jesus was experiencing- His soul was coming to grasp the weight of rejection. It was not the crown of thorns or the nails in His hand- but rather it was this being forsaken that wrung from Him the cry of anguish! Now we need to be clear here. Sin does not have the power to break the relationship between the Father and the Son. In other words, the Trinity is not being broken as such. The Father and Son can never be fully divided or separated. But the experience of the comfort and the joy of communion is ruptured for a time. Jesus is not being treated as a faithful Son- He is being treated as a rebellious sinner as we will see more in our last point. And to prove this lack of communion, not only is heaven silent- heaven actually becomes dark. As we read in v. 33, darkness covers the land for 3 hours. The sun itself refuses to shine- Jesus is hidden from the sight of man just as the Father hides His face from His Son. Darkness is presented as a sign of lament and judgement. Hell is described at outer darkness. What is happening is that as Jesus is forsaken by the Father, hell it let loose upon Jesus. Being the 9th hour, it would normally be the brightest part of the day. Instead, midday looked like

midnight! Noon becomes dark- a black shroud covers the sky as the Son cry- My God- why have you forsaken me. Even now- moments from death- Jesus is fulfilling all the prophecies. Even His words of anguish are recited from Psalm 22- My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

II. Who was Forsaken

Now what we understand what it means to be forsaken, in our next point we consider who it is that is being forsaken. In this point we note- the Son is praying to the Father. The 2nd Person of the Trinity calling upon the 1st Person of the Trinity! He who was with God and is very God- asking a question of Him who is the unchanging God and Father of all light and life! Who is Jesus calling upon? God the Father- who is the fount and source of everything good. He who is the source of Love- would forsake His one and only- His firstborn Son! Now when we think back to what God the Father has said about Jesus thus far in His ministry- we take note of how the Father has always identified and upheld His Son. The Father said back in Matthew 3 as Jesus' baptism- this is my beloved Son- with Him I am well pleased. Or on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration in Mark 9- this is My beloved Son- listen to Him. Or also in John 12- speaking in response to Jesus' prayer- I have glorified my name and I will glorify My name again! So the Father is not shy to speak about the identity of His Son and His pleasure in His Son. But now- on the cross- at the point of Jesus' greatest need and deepest struggle and pain- now the Father is silent! Added to this fact, Jesus calls upon the Father as God- My God. The Son is recognising a shift- a change. Where once the disciples were told that they could pray to Jesus' Father- and their Father in heaven. Now Jesus prays- My God! Not Father- but God! And yet- God is still My God! Still Jesus sees that God the Father is God and remains God- as My God- the one to whom I remain loyal and submissive! If there is no other way- then My God I will drink this cup! And we also note that this is Jesus calling out to God! Why have you forsaken Me? Jesus is and remains the perfect, only begotten and beloved son! The perfect and holy one- the righteous Lamb of God! He who was with the Father in glory- who now came to earth and took on flesh! The Son who was

made into the likeness of a servant- made lower than the heavenly angels- suffering now in body and soul- but one day soon will be crowned with glory and honor! As Jesus was silent before Herod- now the Father is silent for His Son. The Son and those standing near the cross will not hear the Father's voice- because the Son was condemned to die with none to shield. The Father remains silent- the Son remains condemned with none to defend. Now why would the Father forsake His Son? Why would He permit His Son to be hung on a cross? We know that the Jewish leaders put Jesus to death because they were jealous of Him- but why would Jesus be abandoned by the Father?

III. Why He was Forsaken

Now we return to that question in our third point- why would the Father forsake His Son? As Jesus asks- why have you my Father forsaken me your Son? There was nothing in Jesus- nothing that He had done that would cause the Father to forsake His perfectly holy and righteous son. No, the reason that the Father forsook the Son is because of the Father love for His people! We need to follow the reasoning. The Father abandoned the Son because the Father loves His chosen people- and the Father knows that the only way to save His chosen, special people is by denying His Son! In other words, the only way in which you and I can be saved is if the Father forsakes the Son! It is God's desire to ransom a people- to save the lost- that justifies a rejection like this! His commitment to our salvation makes this forsaking necessary! You see, God is angry with sin- and Jesus had become sin for us as II Cor. 5 says. So God becomes angry with His Son- because of what His Son had become. Jesus had not become a sinful man- but rather Jesus had become a substitute! Our Sins were transferred to Him- and that is why He was forsaken! Nothing Jesus did deserved this treatment- it was because He was taking our place and suffering because of what we had done and would do. It was because of the people that Jesus represented- that is why He was forsaken! It pleased God to bruise His Son for our sake- knowing that the Son loves us as well and would be willing to be forsaken for us! Or as Gal. 3 puts it, He became as if He was a lawbreaker- made to be a curse! Being cursed for us- instead of us! That is why He was on the cross- that is why He was forsaken! Such amazing

love- that Jesus would become sin and become accursed for us! So on the cross in the darkness- the Father gives His Son no support- as the awful payment for our sins is made and the sacrifice of atonement is offered! To be forsaken is to be denied access. The way was closed for sinners to come to God- similar to the way that the Most Holy Place was closed with a curtain. Sinners are denied access to God- the Temple Curtain stood in the way. Those who are forsaken by God cannot come in. But we know what happened to that Temple Curtain- don't we? As v. 38 reveals. That Temple Curtain that once blocked the way was torn in two- Jesus was forsaken so that those who were once forsaken in their sins might be welcomed- that the way into God's presence would be made opened! To be forsaken is to pray and be met with silence! Jesus was forsaken- His words met with silence- so that when we pray, we might know our prayers will always be heard and answered! Listen to what our Catechism QA 44 says. Jesus descended into hell- He suffered hellish agony by suffering unspeakable anguish of body and soul. By suffering in this way- by being forsaken- He has delivered me from hellish agony and torment! In other words, Jesus was forsaken so that I might never be forsaken! He was rejected so that I might be received! This is an incredibly comforting truth! Paul illustrates it in II Cor. 4:9- I am persecuted but not forsaken. God's presence always remains with me- and nothing can separate us from Him and His love! Or as Heb. 13 says, He will never leave you nor forsake you. Let's read from II Tim. 4:16-17. Note- although everyone else might forsake us in this world- although everyone might turn their backs on us- the Lord will always stand by us! Jesus was forsaken so that we might never be forsaken!

To conclude, understanding how and why Jesus was forsaken gives us great comfort! Since He was cursed, we are blessed! He was rejected, we are welcomed and received! He was beaten and bruised so that we might be healed! The Father turned His face away from Jesus- so that He might always smile upon us in His grace! In Christ the Father now says to us, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you! Such is the love of God the Father- and such is the gift purchased by God the Son! Now we can call upon Our Father- and know He will always be with us!