

**Mark 15:33-34**

On a Friday afternoon nearly 2,000 years ago, the most frightening words ever uttered came from the mouth of our Lord. Not just spoken—these words came screaming out of His mouth: “My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me!”

The soldiers standing guard were used to hearing cries of anguish. Crucifixion was painfully ugly. But they had never heard words like these. These were more than just cries of pain. These were words of bitter agony that came from the deepest part of His being. Nothing had prepared Him for this. Even though Jesus knew this was coming, when His Father forsook Him on the cross, His suffering is utterly impossible for us to understand.

For Jesus was in hell. To be forsaken by God is to be in hell. Forsaken by His Father, Jesus was suffering the torments of hell. God, who had prepared hell for the devil and his angels, had Himself entered into its darkness and misery.

Why? In silent awe we dare to whisper the words our Lord cried in anguish: Why was He forsaken? Why? Scripture gives us the answer: He who knew no sin, became sin for us. Jesus didn't just go to the cross, He went there bearing our sins. Jesus went to the cross being a divorced man, leaving behind his children. He went to the cross taking our lies, and He became a liar. Jesus became insecure and lost respect for himself. He became as an immoral man, with angry words and dishonest feelings. He went to the cross as a serial murderer, a rapist, a terrorist. Jesus, the holy, innocent Son of God became sin on that lonely cross. Every sin you and I, and all mankind ever committed, in thought, word, and deed, was laid upon Him and became His.

And His Father was sickened at Him. Jesus was repulsive for His Father to look at. And, in fact, He could not—He forsook Him. The worst punishment one can ever know—to be forsaken by God, Jesus knew on the cross. The punishment you and I deserve—for we who were born in sin, daily commit sin; we daily break God's holy commandments. We are the ones who deserve to be forsaken. We're the ones the Father should turn away from in disgust. We should be repulsive for our God to look upon.

But that is precisely why Jesus was forsaken. For God had determined, even before our first parents sinned in the Garden, that, not us, but His own Son would be the forsaken One. Who can know the mind of God? Who can comprehend His love toward sinful man? To send His beloved Son to the place of torment, that we should never see that awful place. To cast His Son away from His presence, that we might always have a place with Him. To reject His Son, that you and I might be received into His eternal dwellings.

Even before Eden, this was the love of God toward us. When our first parents refused to accept responsibility for their sin, God took that responsibility. He could not go back on His Word—the sinner must be punished. But He would become that sinner. He would accept that punishment.

And so Jesus stepped into the flesh of Adam and Eve and their descendants. As they were drawn to the tree in the Garden, so Jesus allowed Himself to be drawn to the tree of the cross. And as Adam and Eve reached out their hands to taste the fruit that brought death, so Jesus stretched out His hands that He might taste our death. And as Adam and Eve were

cast out from the presence of God in the Garden, so Jesus was cast out from the presence of the Father on the tree of the cross.

Why did God forsake Jesus? So that you would not be forsaken. So that you would never have to scream in anguish those frightening words, “My God...Why hast Thou forsaken me!” Jesus was forsaken because of you. Because your dear Father in heaven refuses to give you up. He will not part with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. That’s why He called you to His family in Holy Baptism. That’s why He draws you to Himself, again and again, through His Word and Sacrament. His word to you is not, “I forsake you,” but “I forgive you!” And He who was forsaken for you, and who is now risen from the dead, has promised that within His Word and Sacraments, He will be with you always, that He may keep you faithful unto Him.

We do not deny that there are many souls that are lost—who have forsaken Christ. There are many who cry continually those painful words of Christ on the cross, “Why hast Thou forsaken me!” But those are not your words. You who belong to Christ Jesus through Water and Word, Body and Blood, will never know the anguish of those painful words. My friend, on the cross, Jesus died alone that you and I may live with Christ, may die with Christ, and may rise with Christ. Amen.