

## Matthew 27:46

*“About the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”*

These words sound to us like a cry of despair. “Why, God...Why forsake Me!” Jesus seems to be in utter shock and disbelief. These words from the cross can be very disturbing to us. God is our Father also. If He can forsake Jesus, then surely He can forsake us.

This is how we think because we know that this is what we deserve. I cannot begin to count the number of times I have forsaken God. Can you? I turn away from God for the smallest reasons, and for no reason at all. I turn away from God to embrace this life. I turn away from God to embrace the pleasures of sin. Why shouldn't God forsake me? I have given Him every reason to do so. And there are days in my life when I wonder if He hasn't done so.

What am I to think, after all, when my prayers seem to go unanswered? God, where are You? What am I to think when troubles, such as this virus, do not leave me but rise up even stronger against me? Hasn't God turned away from me also? Has He not forsaken also me? If Jesus can cry out in despair, then why can't I?

Friend, Jesus' cry is not one of despair. It is a cry of faith. Jesus did not cry, “God, why forsake Me?” He cried, *“My God, My God...”* Even in the midst of being forsaken, Jesus knows, He believes, He confesses, “You, dear Father, are My God!” *“Though You forsake Me, yet will I trust in You.”*

With His cry from the cross, Jesus teaches us to have faith. *“You are My beloved Son,”* said the Father to Jesus at His baptism. Therefore, Jesus would hold Him to His word, even when His Father turned His face away from Him.

You, my dear fellow sinner, have the same word from God. In your baptism He declares to you that you are His beloved child. And nothing can take this away from you.

God has not forsaken you. But rather, through the very troubles that rise up against you, He draws you closer to Himself. Is not this what He is doing right now? God cannot forsake you, for He cannot break His promise to you in your baptism.

You belong to Him through Christ. Though you and I turn away from Him so often, He does not turn away from you. But He forgives you. Yes, He does truly forgive you. And He calls you back to Himself. Jesus teaches us to believe that God is our God; that He is our dear Father even when it appears that He is not.

Jesus cried out in faith from the belly of hell itself. Yes, His Father turned away from Him. And this is what we deserve. But Jesus took it from you. It happened to Jesus so that it cannot happen to you.

God's face is always turned toward you in love. It is the face of mercy. For we see His face within the holy wounds of Jesus. You need never despair...never. Whatever your struggles, whether you live through them or die from them, you belong to the Lord. Amen.