

Forsaken by God

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[0:00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We are continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. In fact, we're getting very near to the end of the Gospel. If you've been here for a while, you may remember we started back in 2021, so it's taken us about two years, but now we are in the next to last chapter, chapter 15 out of 16 chapters.

And if you took a look at my letter to the congregation this week, you'll know that after this, starting in the month of August, we'll be headed into the book of Judges, because our practice is to trade off Old Testament and New Testament books.

But for a few more weeks, we are in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and His life and His death and His resurrection, and we've for some time now been slowly walking with Jesus in the last hours before His death and His resurrection.

[1:29] And now we're coming here to the very end. And so we're going to look simply at two things this morning. First of all, the forsaken Savior, and second, the torn curtain.

The forsaken Savior and the torn curtain. I'm going to invite you to turn with me in God's Word. We're in Mark chapter 15, starting in verse 33.

And you can turn there in your Bible, you can turn on your phone, and you can turn in your worship guide. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. And God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so that's why we read now Mark chapter 15, starting at verse 33. And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[2:34] And some of the bystanders hearing it said, behold, he is calling Elijah. And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink, saying, wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.

Verse 37. And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly, this man was the Son of God.

There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James the younger, and of Joseph and Salome. When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him.

And there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you again for this time that you've given us.

You've called us and drawn us together to worship you. And we thank you also that you've given us your word, that you speak to us clearly, that you instruct us, that you do what you do here.

[4:00] You show us and tell us about your Son and our Savior, our Lord Jesus. We ask that you would give us a clear vision of him this morning, that we would see his great beauty and glory, his love, his power, and his authority, that you would grow our love for him, our reverence for him, our

obedience to him.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Now we start this portion hearing about Jesus knowing that it is incredibly dark.

We're told, verse 33, from the sixth hour until the ninth hour. To translate that into modern language, we would say that's from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Or for some of you, 1,200 to 1,500. The question here is, why is it so important? Why does it matter that there's darkness over the land as we begin Jesus' time here on the cross?

And to understand that, we actually have to go back in history, in the story of God's people, of Israel, to when they were in slavery in the land of Egypt. When Israel was in slavery, you'll remember they were in slavery for 400 years, and then they were brought out, they were rescued from Egypt by God.

[5:23] We learn about this in the book of Exodus, which is an Old Testament book. Ex means out of, and the odos part means road. So Exodus is just the road out of, the road out of Egypt. And you'll remember that God delivers his people from Egypt, from the hand of Pharaoh, who is unwilling to let them go.

His heart has been hardened. And so God performs these 10 curses on the land of Egypt. It starts out a little small, it gets worse and worse. And one of the worst curses, the ninth out of the 10th curse, is the curse of darkness.

So over the whole land of Egypt, no one can see their hand in front of their face. And what happens then? What's the 10th curse? If you're familiar with the story, you know that the 10th curse is the death of the firstborn sons of Egypt.

God's great act of redemption in the Old Testament is the Exodus. It is God delivering his people out of slavery from Egypt. The great act of redemption in the New Testament is what we're looking at right here.

Jesus' death and resurrection, delivering his people, not from slavery to Egypt, but delivering them from slavery to sin. Why is it important then that there's darkness over the land?

[6:44] In the first Exodus, the curse of darkness preceded the death of the firstborn son. In the second Exodus, the same thing happens again.

Darkness precedes the death of God's son. Exodus is being acted out all over again, except it is even greater and more intense this time.

It is not the firstborn sons of Egypt who are dying. It is God's own son who is dying. Remember in the story of the Exodus, God's people protected themselves by painting the blood of a lamb on the frames of their doors.

That's where we get the term Passover. God passed over the houses that were covered by the blood of the lamb. Here we see that lamb die.

Jesus is the one, the first Exodus pointed towards. He is God's great and final act of redemption for his people. And so it makes sense then that for three hours, Jesus is hanging here on the cross under the curse of darkness.

[8:05] It also helps us understand what the darkness means. The darkness here is a sign of God's judgment. And it's a sign of God's judgment specifically on the one who is hanging on the cross.

In other words, Jesus for these three hours is experiencing complete separation from God.

Jesus during these three hours is receiving the punishment that we deserve. Jesus during these three hours is under a curse.

The curse that was meant to be laid down on us. Now I want us to pause here for a second and understand the seriousness of what's happening to Jesus in this moment.

It is not just that he is separated from God, that he's not experiencing the love and favor and smile of God that he's used to.

[9:12] It is also that he is experiencing the wrath of God. As darkness falls on the land, Jesus is undergoing the purpose for which he came.

Jesus is receiving the punishment, the wrath of God that is due to us. Of course, the separation itself would feel like hell.

One pastor says this, the longer the love, the deeper the love, the greater the torment of its loss. Which gives us a principle here.

The deeper the relationship, the greater the pain of separation. And here is Jesus, who has the deepest relationship, one that we cannot even imagine with the Father. And so, a pain greater than you or I can fathom. The deeper the relationship, the greater the pain of separation.

[10:19] Jesus has the deepest relationship with the Father. Therefore, he is experiencing the greatest pain. We cannot imagine the level of pain and suffering that Jesus is experiencing at this moment.

We cannot imagine the level of pain and suffering that Jesus faces for those three hours. And so, the point is this.

Here, we see, we watch Jesus receiving what we deserve. and we get a small glimpse of how terrible that is.

We see for a moment Jesus receives what we deserve and we get just a glimpse of how awful it truly is.

We see Jesus taking our punishment and we get a sense of how bad that punishment actually is. You may have noticed in your worship guide on page four, one man says this, it is in Jesus' cry that we see more than anywhere else are given to see the sinfulness of sin.

[11:44] What must sin be if it took the God forsakeness of God's own Son to atone for it? How are we even to begin to measure the awfulness of sin?

It is only really here that we come to have any sense of the sheer awfulness of sin. The real horror of sin is that it is rebellion against our maker.

Why does the darkness matter? Because it shows us how bleak life outside of Christ is. It shows us how hopeless it is.

Darkness here gives us a picture of what it actually means to be separated from God. It also helps us understand Jesus' words here in verse 34.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which means my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[12:48] Jesus here has been cast into darkness. He's been cast into darkness literally, and he's also been cast into darkness spiritually.

God's goodness, God's loving presence has been fully removed from him. And so you'll see also page seven of your worship guide. Same author says this, what is hell?

It is the absence of the gracious presence of God and the unending experience of his holy wrath. All support has been withdrawn from Jesus, the support of his father's presence and love and the support of the father's common grace.

There was no human consolation or support, only unrelieved aloneness. The savior of the world, the Lord of glory is devoted to destruction.

Why is Jesus forsaken? What is the answer to Jesus' question? Jesus was forsaken for you if you're in Christ.

[14:04] Jesus was forsaken because that's what we deserve. In fact, that's what the prophet Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 53.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus is forsaken God died in the way. Jesus died in darkness so that you could walk in the light. Jesus had to be rejected by the Father so that you could be accepted. Jesus experienced hell so that you could be with him in heaven.

That's why he was forsaken. And so Christian, the great encouragement for you is this.

[15:21] Are you afraid that God will hold your sins against you? remember that Jesus was forsaken.

Are you afraid that God will abandon you? Remember that Jesus was forsaken. Are you afraid that God might run out of patience with you?

Remember that Jesus was forsaken. forsaken. Are you afraid that God might give up on you? Remember that Jesus was forsaken.

Do you believe the lie that there's no future for you? Remember that Jesus was forsaken. forsaken. Jesus was forsaken by the Father so that you could be accepted. On the other hand, while there is encouragement, the challenge is also this.

[16:38] Are you convinced that your sins are not really that bad? Remember that Jesus was forsaken.

are you convinced that it's mostly other people who need to be saved? Remember that Jesus was forsaken.

Do you believe that we are powerful enough as humanity to fix this world? Remember that Jesus had to be forsaken.

that's the encouragement and the challenge that God gives us in this passage. If you are anything like me, one of your favorite things about living in Colorado is getting pelted by hail at unexpected moments.

Just so invigorating. It keeps you on your toes. You never know what's going to hit you. One of the things I enjoy doing when the hail comes down is I like to stand on the porch of my house and watch.

[18:01] Because I know as long as things don't get too bad and as long as I'm on the porch everything is sort of at a distance. I am protected by the roof of my house.

The roof might not be safe. And some of us have learned the hard way. But I will be. Natural disasters are a reminder to us, a small picture of God's wrath and judgment.

And there are times we get to watch it from a distance, right? God's judgment. This passage is a chance for us to see God's judgment from a distance.

It's a chance for us to see God's judgment from a place of safety. All people are able to watch and see God's ultimate judgment from a distance for a time.

All people are able to watch and see God's ultimate judgment from a distance for a time. What I mean by that is we have passages like this that give us a sense of what God's judgment is like and we are not experiencing it right now.

[19:29] That is not to say we will not experience it one day. Christian, the good news for you is this.

As we see God's judgment in this passage, we take shelter in Christ. You will only see God's ultimate judgment from a distance.

you are covered, you're protected by Christ. That's the good news. The bad news is this.

If you are not a Christian, God's judgment is worse than anything you can imagine. God's judgment is worse than anything you've ever experienced.

Christ. And the reason is this. You don't know what complete darkness is like. You don't know what complete darkness is like.

[20:38] And what I mean by that is explained on page eight of your worship guide. Even those who do not know Jesus in the world today cannot fully imagine an existence without some experience of God's grace and presence.

Life on this earth is full of God's grace every day. Even the fact that we have breath and life is an example of God's common grace which he gives to all people.

Hell though will be the full experience of God's wrath without his gracious and kind presence. It will be eternal torment.

In other words whether you believe in God or not you experience his gracious and kind presence every day. Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter 5 that God makes the sun and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

God gives his goodness to all people on the earth now. There will come a time when that is not true anymore.

[21:48] There will come a time when those who have rejected Christ will experience what we see pictured for a little bit in this passage which is complete and utter darkness.

Removed completely from all of God's goodness and his grace. Hide in Jesus.

Jesus is the only place where it's safe and where you can see judgment from a distance.

Jesus is the only place that's safe from God's judgment on the evil in this world. He's the only place that's safe from God's judgment on the evil in our hearts.

we see Jesus receive God's judgment in this passage so that we could hide under the shelter of his wing.

[22:59] We see Jesus receive God's judgment so that when the hail of wrath falls we are covered.

I told you two weeks ago and I'll tell you again the greater the love the greater the loyalty. The greater the love the greater the loyalty the one who loves you the most is worth following the most no matter what.

No one loves you more than Jesus. no one is worth following therefore more than Jesus.

No one deserves greater loyalty than Jesus. Jesus was in darkness for three hours so that you could walk in the light.

Jesus was forsaken by the Father so that you could be accepted. Jesus experienced hell so that you could join him in heaven.

[24 : 20] Now there's a lot of other things going on in this passage but I want to call your attention to this in verse 38.

Remember I told you we were going to talk about two things the forsaken Savior and the torn curtain. And these are in fact two sides of the same coin. Jesus receives God's punishment the wrath that we deserve.

He dies verse 37 Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last and then the next thing we heard here verse 38 and the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Now why does it matter that the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom? To understand the significance of this you have to know a little bit about the Old Testament temple. First of all the Old Testament temple was understood to be the place where God's presence was in a special way. So when the people of Israel were in the desert where would the temple be when they set up camp?

[25 : 27] Temple would be in the very middle. And they would set up camp all around the temple. Inside the temple there was the holy place and then there was the most holy place.

And the most holy place was the place that contained the Ark of the Covenant and it was the place where no one was ever supposed to go except one person once a year.

So once a year the high priest was allowed to go bringing a sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people doing all sorts of preparations to make sure he had cleansed himself in the way that God had commanded to be able to go into the holy of holies.

And there was a curtain. this thick curtain that is torn from top to bottom. Which is a way of saying God's presence is now something his people can access.

God's presence is now fully available to his people. God's says this in the back of your worship guide.

[27 : 06] At the moment Jesus Christ died, this massive curtain was ripped open. This was God's way of saying this is the sacrifice that ends all sacrifices. The way is now open to approach me.

Now that Jesus has died, anyone who believes in him can see God and connect to God. God's presence is finally available to his people.

Jesus was forsaken so that you could be accepted. Jesus was forsaken by God so that you could enter his presence.

In fact, that's what the author of Hebrews tells us. In Hebrews chapter 10, he talks about this tearing of the temple curtain and he says this, we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is through his flesh. Don't miss what he said there. Now we have confidence to enter the holy places. So that we're not left wondering what that means, he goes on to tell us two verses later exactly what we're supposed to do with that.

[28 : 36] Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

what are we supposed to do? Now that Jesus has died and the curtain has been torn, we are supposed to draw near. Jesus was forsaken by God so that we could enter in to his presence.

He was forsaken for a purpose so that you could draw near. And so Christian, that is true of you.

Jesus experienced darkness so that you could experience God's light. Jesus was forsaken so that you could draw near.

And so for you, the command is this, draw near to God. draw near to God as you confess your sins, knowing that it's safe because Jesus has suffered in your place.

[29 : 58] Draw near to God looking for the wisdom that you don't have, knowing that God promises to give it to those who ask. Draw near to God and ask him for your needs because it is safe.

Jesus died in darkness so that you could walk in the light. Jesus was forsaken by the Father so that you could be accepted.

Jesus experienced hell so that you could join with him in heaven. And that's why we're going to sing bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah what a savior.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven we praise you and thank you for letting us only see your judgment from a distance.

We thank you that Jesus lived the life that we should have lived but didn't and died the death that we should have died saving us from your punishment and wrath.

[31 : 30] We thank you that we don't have to be afraid of darkness because we know that we walk in the light. We don't have to be afraid of hell because Jesus took it for us.

We don't have to be afraid that you'll reject us because Jesus was forsaken. We ask that you would grow our hope and our faith and our confidence in you knowing that we have a hope that is firm and steadfast.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.