

## Mark 15: 33-41

33 When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup>At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' <sup>35</sup>When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' <sup>36</sup>And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' <sup>37</sup>Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup>And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

40 There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. <sup>41</sup>These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

**Meditation:** We now come to the climax of the gospel. And what a climax! It shocks! Here we encounter not the heroic cry of a martyr or the peaceful calm of a saint. Rather we encounter the despairing cry of the afflicted. Can we fully comprehend what this means, the experience of it all? Did Jesus suffer the world's rejection and pain to the point where his very purpose and destiny as the anointed one of God is put into question in his soul? Some would challenge such an interpretation. Yet during the dreadfully long period of silence between 9:00am and 3:00pm, we can only imagine the ordeal Jesus was undergoing. Rejected and abandoned by all, intense pain running through his whole body, and the very questioning of whether all of this could, indeed, be incorporated into God's greater will for the salvation of the world...

'He descended into hell' (the Apostles' Creed). This, according to Protestant Reformers Luther and Calvin is what is going on here. Jesus is suffering hell - a complete feeling of separation from the One who was his very soul. Yet may this not be a more powerful demonstration, fulfillment and expression of God's love in a broken world. Only a God who suffers the depths of human affliction can be God 'Emmanuel' (Matthew 1) with us, even the most afflicted. Only a God who incorporates into God's very essence the experience of what it's like to feel divine absence, an emptiness and abyss in one's soul, is a God who can be all in all. Only a God who reaches out in com-*passion* (a being-with in suffering) to all life, has the credibility to forgive the worst of sinners and comfort the greatest of sufferers. May God be praised for such incomprehensible love!

**Prayer:** When I look at the world around me, O God, I see the pain, neglect, brokenness and suffering. I also see the cruelty, contempt, hate and indifference. I also recognize my own vulnerability and complicity all too often, O God. Have mercy on me. Embrace me. Give me eyes to see you and a heart to feel you in the pain that isolates me and the evil that scares and shocks me because its currents reside in me too. In a world that has pushed you out, a world without mystery or magic, may I re-engage with your presence as the ground of being and the ground of my personal being in body, mind and soul... I stand waiting and ready for you to fill me ever more fully and deeply, O God; Amen.