

WORDS FROM THE CROSS

Day 4: The Silence of God

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” is the Aramaic form of Jesus’ haunting words as He is hanging on the cross near death. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” In a moment of profound anguish and despair, Jesus’ loud cry out from the cross reveals the depth of Jesus’ humanity and his experience of utter abandonment as he bears the weight of sin and separation from God.

This cry of desperation echoes the words of Psalm 22, a prophetic lament that foretells the suffering of the Messiah. With these words, Jesus identifies with humanity’s pain and anguish, experiencing our brokenness and alienation from God.

Jesus’ cry is a raw and honest expression of someone who feels abandoned or forsaken. This was a real forsakenness, which means that God, the father, really did abandon His son in His moment of suffering.

How is this even possible? It is possible because at the cross, Jesus bore our sin and, consequently, our judgment. Instead of pouring His just wrath out on us, God pours it out on Jesus, and as a result, He abandons His only Son to die alone. This act of ultimate sacrifice, where Jesus willingly took on the sins of humanity, is a testament to His love and mercy for us. Theologians explain this “silence from heaven” as the Father’s necessary reaction to the Son becoming sin for you and me.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Have you felt that kind of despair in your own life? Though God will never do it, we may feel forsaken or abandoned. In our pain, we may question where God is and wonder what good could come from our suffering.

Let us be realistic, sometimes God really is silent; sometimes we cannot rely on help from up high; sometimes there are no answers. Sometimes, God is silent, and our pain, our confusion, our anger, our sadness, our disappointment, and our tears are great. Sometimes life just is not fair; and, sometimes, there is nothing left but our faith! Sometimes, all we have left is our faith to which we must cling. Faith that God has not forgotten us; faith that God is weeping with us. Faith, that life, somehow, will go on and that wounds will be healed. Faith, that even if we don’t sense it and feel it, our lives are in God’s hands (Frank Schaefer).

Because of the cross, we can rejoice even when we feel pain or live with unanswered prayers and sleepless nights. Out of the worst evil imaginable, the sinless Son of God on the cross brought about the greatest good ever known.

