

Easter! So What?
My God, My God, Why Have You Abandoned Me?
Matthew 27:45-54

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Text Introduction: 9 Powerful Words! Only 4 in Jesus' Aramaic language. Through the years you have grown accustomed to my question, "So What?" at the conclusion of my messages. I fell into this practice a few years ago as the result of making sure that every message ends on a note of action. As I routinely say, "We gather not so much for information, but for inspiration and transformation." I pray we do that today.

As we journey toward Easter this year, we are pursuing what I would call the ultimate "So What" preaching series. Through the week after Easter, we are considering several questions surrounding the Easter accounts in the Bible. Some of the questions come from Jesus. Others questions come from the disciples. A few of the questions come from adversaries of Jesus like Pilate. Many of the questions are our questions. I think you will discover that every question impacts us. That is, all of the questions cause us to ask "So What?"

Our text today is Matthew 27:45-54. The trial of Jesus has been completed and now Matthew tells us that Jesus is hanging on the cross. All total, the Gospels give us 7 distinct saying of the cross from Jesus. Our text gives us one of those seven and that cry becomes the basis of our message today.

Text: ⁴⁵ From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over the whole land. ⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?*" that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling for Elijah."

⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and offered him a drink. ⁴⁹ But the rest said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

⁵⁰ But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. ⁵³ And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many.

⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Introduction: Again, **9 Powerful Words! Only 4 in Jesus' Aramaic language.**

Why? Why these words? Every word is filled with depth of emotion from Jesus and depth of meaning for us. In Jesus' cry from the cross we see . . .

The Priority of Supplication

The first thing to observe in these nine words is that this is a prayer. Jesus is praying when He is arrested. You remember that prayer. “My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39) Then He prays, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” (Matthew 26:42) Then, Matthew simply says that Jesus prayed a third time, saying the same thing. (Matthew 26:44) Then, they come for Him.

What do we do in the darkest times of our lives? Where do we turn for strength? We follow Jesus’ example. We turn to the Father. And a peace comes over us. Luke recorded this word from the cross, “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.” (Luke 23:46) John recorded, “It is finished.” And then, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” (John 19:30)

Do you see the principle? Though Jesus was in agony, He was at peace. Prayer can do the same in our lives.

The Power of Scripture

The next thing to notice in these nine words is the power of Scripture. Jesus is praying to be sure, but He is also quoting Scripture. The Scripture that He is quoting is Psalm 22.

In Jesus, we have a wonderful example of the power and importance of Scripture in the most demanding moments of life. The most familiar example of this is in the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as He is tempted in the wilderness. Three times Jesus quoted the Old Testament Scripture as he faced the temptation of Satan. Though Psalm 22 starts off as a prayer of suffering, the conclusion of the Psalm is that this is a Psalm of praise. Might Jesus be doing the same here?

What are we to do in life’s most despairing moments? We follow the example of Jesus. We turn to the Father in prayer. We turn to His Word. We find in both that a peace washes over us.

We need to read His Word, but we also need to discipline ourselves to memorize His word.

The Penalty of our Sin

The spiritual agony that Jesus faced is most clear. Remember the commentary from 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He, the sinless One, took upon Himself all of our—all sin of all people of all time.

I believe this is the cry of the cross because this is how Jesus felt. That’s how sin makes us feel isn’t it? And these words are accompanied by Jesus.

Take a look at this picture.



A STEP OF

This is the picture that accompanies the Gospel tract that accompanies our FAITH evangelism approach to sharing with others the Gospel. You know what I like about this picture? We are holding the hammer. Our sin put Jesus on the cross. For our sin He died.

The Provision of our Salvation

Theologians give us the phrase penal substitutionary atonement. It is steeped in the Old Testament.

Listen to Leviticus 16:20-22.

²⁰ “When he has finished making atonement for the most holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar, he is to present the live male goat. ²¹ Aaron will lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the Israelites’ iniquities and rebellious acts—all their sins. He is to put them on the goat’s head and send it away into the wilderness by the man appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry all their iniquities into a desolate land, and the man will release it there.

Here is the Gospel. We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Sin has a penalty—separation from a Holy God. Jesus took our sin and took our penalty so that we could be free from the eternal penalty of sin. He took for a moment our abandonment so that we wouldn’t have to.

So What?

For our earthly problems and our eternal problem, our answer is the same. We trust Jesus.