



Forsaken! Abandoned! Humiliated! Forgotten!
Despised! Left to die.....Alone

This image of Jesus, on the cross, bleeding to death, life literally oozing out of him, is an image of excessive cruelty and unbearable pain. I struggle to believe how we humans, can be so demeaning, so venomous and angry, so full of hate.

It takes all my energy to visit this image on the Cross and to listen for a piercing, haunting cry from Jesus. It is so real! We are engulfed in the words: **“My God, My God!** We know these words. We’ve heard them before:

“Why Have You Forsaken Me?”

Most likely, you and I have cried out in a similar fashion, when we have been in utter darkness, feeling abandoned by God. Jesus, hangs in pain and despair on the Cross, and yet, something within him trusts God to deliver him from this agonizing death. Does our cry include trusting God that much?

This one quote from Jesus at his crucifixion is found in Mark’s Gospel (and also in Matthew’s Gospel). Why did these two gospel writers only give us this one

quote from Jesus? Was this the most important saying from Jesus on the Cross? It is eerily haunting; a hideous cry from deep within the human fiber of Jesus' soul.

Perhaps you have said something similar to God; something that came right out of your gut. There's a place deep within us where we painfully acknowledge what it feels like to be abandoned and alone, feeling our life draining away because of our circumstances. **It is gut wrenching! It is terrifying! It is humbling!**

And on top of all that, to be publicly humiliated, mocked and insulted. The crowds ganged up on Jesus and they let him have it! I struggle to go there too.

Growing up on school playgrounds we watched certain kids taunt and tease other kids mercilessly. We've seen those kids humiliated, cry, and look for a place to hide or to someone for comfort. We may have joined in some of that group dynamics without even knowing why we did it.

I remember in the third grade and on crutches. It was a rainy day and in the hallway my crutches went out from under me as the rubber tips slipped on pavement. I crashed hard, spread-eagled on the concrete. And it hurt. But when a boy near me began to laugh and then the others in the hallway joined in the laughter, that's when I really hurt inside.

As I collected myself and went back to my room, the boy who started the laughter continued it in the class and again others joined in. I began to cry more, looking a place to hide and there was none. I was pained and hurt.

The crowds ganged up on Jesus. They gave him all they could. “So! You who are going to destroy the Temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!” Their sarcastic taunts echoed across Calvary hill.

“He saved others, but he can’t save himself!” That’s just the problem isn’t it? We want to save ourselves. I want to save myself. I want to do it my way. Even the Son of God, had to relinquish his will to the Father, “not my will, but thy will be done!”

In high school, several friends of mine made fun of one of our classmates. I joined in, mocking him and teasing him, without giving it much thought. Our classmate took it all in without ever saying a word back to us. After a while I felt rotten inside for being mean and uncaring. I hated myself for joining in with my friends to make fun of someone else. Even today, I feel remorse for acting like that. Why did I join in?

Life gives us opportunities to build up and encourage others or to join with the crowds and dehumanize people, physically, psychologically, spiritually. The author of our Lenten study book, Adam Hamilton asks the question, “Where are we in the crowd around Jesus’ crucifixion?” I don’t want to consider that I am in that crowd.

Have you ever joined a crowd whose actions dehumanized others?

Jesus' cry is about abandonment, feeling forsaken by God. He begins this cry with the opening words from Psalm 22, "My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?" Why does Jesus pray from Psalm 22? It's what he knew. Jesus is praying in a time of despair. The psalm continues with these words, "Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest (Ps. 22:1b, 2).

The crowds surrounding Jesus, who would have been Jewish, knew this song. Jesus begins the psalm, but the Jewish crowds would know what else is in it. If we dig a little deeper we can hear what is going on in Jesus' mind and perhaps what the crowds might have been thinking

Verse 7 -- "All who see me mock at me."

Verse 16 -- "A company of evildoers encircles me," and

"They have pierced my hands and feet."

Verse 18 -- "For my clothing they cast lots.

Psalm 22 is dark, steeped in despair. But, it ends in trust, in confident trust of God at work. The psalm continues, "For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him" (v. 24). Has God heard you and sustained you when you couldn't see the light of grace?

Is Jesus using his time on the cross to teach us again about the power of pray, that God will not forsake us, that God will hear us when we pray? Is Jesus teaching us to trust God no matter where we find ourselves along lifes' journey. Jesus models sacrificial love and we are to do the same in our lives.

The conclusion of Psalm 22 reads as follows, "Before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn" (vv. 29-32).

The hope at the conclusion of Psalm 22 is that death is not the end for the psalmist; death is not the end for Jesus; death not the end for the gospel, and for you and me (*future generations...yet unborn*).

Perhaps some of you remember the Hindenburg disaster on May 6, 1937. The radio reporter, Herbert Morrison, age 31, tried to stay calm as he watched the large airship burst into flames and fall to the ground, covering passengers, crew and those on the ground attempting to secure the blimp. Mr. Morrison was quickly chastised for becoming emotional, while he reported all that was happening in front of him, but he's remembered for saying, "**Oh, the humanity!**"

I find it ironic, but Mr. Morrison also said these words, "**...It's burst into flames!** It burst into flames, and it's falling, it's crashing! Watch it! Watch it! Get

out of the way! Get out of the way! Get this, Charlie; get this, Charlie! It's fire—and it's crashing! It's crashing terrible! **Oh, my! Get out of the way, please!**

Oh, the humanity! and all the passengers screaming around here. I told you; it—I can't even talk to people Their friends are out there! Ah! It's—it—it's a—ah! I—I can't talk, ladies and gentlemen. Honest: it's just laying there, mass of smoking wreckage. Ah! And everybody can hardly breathe and talk and the screaming. Lady, I—I—I'm sorry. Honest: I—I can hardly breathe. I—I'm going to step inside, where I cannot see it. Charlie, that's terrible. Ah, ah;—I can't. Listen, folks; I—I'm gonna have to stop for a minute because I've lost my voice. This is the worst thing I've ever witnessed.”

Morrison's phrase "Oh, the humanity" has become an iconic American phrase, most often used in a satirical way to ridicule, diminish and trivialize deep emotional feelings that are part of the human condition. The phrase has also been used in a cynical way to decry exaggerated responses to minor tragedies. I have repeated this story today, not to diminish our human condition, but to emphasize our humanity; to emphasize Jesus' humanity; and the deep wounds God must experience when we are in despair and cry out, when God's own Son cried out.

When I think of Jesus on the Cross, crying out to God, **Jesus is fully human**. I believe it is here where we can relate to our Lord. It's as if, all of us, are crying out, **“Oh, the humanity!”**

In our humanity, Jesus knows how we feel when we are in a place of darkness, hopelessness and despair. May we remember to pray to God with confident trust in a God who will not abandon us. Amen.