

Jesus is Abandoned

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bibles. Our reading today is from Mark's Gospel, Mark chapter 15, which you will find on page 852 of the Pew Bible.

Mark chapter 15, 852, and we will begin reading at verse 15. But as is last week, the focus of our time together today will be in verses 33 to 39, but we're going to pick up the reading in verse 15. So let us hear then the words of God. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas. And having had Jesus scourged, having had him flogged, he delivered him to be crucified.

And the soldiers led Jesus away inside the palace, that is the governor's headquarters. And they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed Jesus in a purple cloak. And twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.

And they began to salute him. Hail, King of the Jews. And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.

[1 : 11] And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Ruthus.

They made him carry the cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha, which means place of a skull. And they offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh. But he did not take it.

And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified him.

And the inscription of the charge against him read, the King of the Jews. And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. And those who passed by derided him, they abused him, wagging their heads and saying, Aha, you who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross.

So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him, one to another, saying, He saved others, yet he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.

[2 : 26] And those who were crucified with him also abused him. And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And some of the bystanders hearing it said, Behold, he's 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's see whether Elijah will come to take him down.

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.

Amen. And may God add his blessing to this. The reading of his word. Well, just before we come to God's preach word, let's pray and ask God's help. Some of you have been asking after Mr. McIntyre that took a stroke last week.

I'll be praying for Mr. McIntyre during our prayer. He's still in hospital. I visited him yesterday. And I'll be remembering him and his family today. But let's come before God and ask God's help for us here and also for Mr. McIntyre in hospital.

[3 : 44] Father, we do indeed give you great thanks for your word, your word that you have given us, Father. Your word that we would not understand unless you gave us ability to understand. So we pray that in our time together, Father, you would indeed come amongst us by your spirit.

The same spirit that inspired Mark to write these words. And please, Lord, open up the meaning you intended for them to us today. We do pray for Mr. McIntyre.

We thank you so much, Father, for the speed of response to the paramedics last week. We thank you, Father, that he's receiving great care there in the Southern General Hospital. And we pray for him, Lord.

And we pray also for his wife, Marion, and his daughter, Heather. As they're there kind of around the clock supporting him. Please bless them, Lord. Strengthen them and give them all that they need as a family.

We thank you, Father, that Mr. McIntyre trusts the Lord Jesus. And Father, so we know that he's safe in the doctor's hands. But more than that, he's safe in your hands. So please speak to us in our time together, we ask.

[4 : 44] In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, our focus today is Mark chapter 15, verse 33 to 39. We began looking at these verses last week.

And we posed this question. How do you view the cross? What is the message of the cross of Jesus Christ to you? Is there a message of great tragedy?

Or is it one of great triumph? Certainly a message of great tragedy would be the view of a lot of folks. And not just folks in the street, but folks that are church attenders.

They just don't see any meaning to the death of Jesus. In fact, it all seems just rather pointless to them. I mentioned the story of a Japanese woman who was reading through the story of the gospel for the first time.

Not knowing anything of the story beforehand. And when she came to the part of the story that we have before us this evening, the crucifixion. When she came to the crucifixion, she was heartbroken. She was so devastated.

[5 : 46] She couldn't read on. She was so disturbed that life for Jesus had ended this way. It seemed such a tragedy to her that the Jesus she had been discovering in the gospel should bow out like this.

Such a tragedy. I told also of the story of Edward Lobb greeting people at the door one day. And this older lady said to him, you know, I've often thought about Jesus.

I've often thought about his death on the cross. And I've always thought, what a waste of such a promise in life. With all his power. His healing power. Just think of all the good he could have done if he'd lived to you as 50 or 60.

What a tragedy. Now friends, as we come to the verses that we have before us in Mark chapter 15 this afternoon. One could be forgiven. One could be forgiven for thinking this way.

That the cross is a tragedy. These verses bring to an end the last week of Jesus' life. Mark devotes six chapters to the last week of Jesus' life. More than a third of his gospel.

[6 : 47] And this was a week that had begun amid scenes of great triumph. Back in Mark chapter 11. Which is actually entitled, The Triumphal Entry in Our Bibles. After three years of public ministry, Jesus arrives in Jerusalem.

For what will be the last week of his life? And he arrives amid scenes of great triumph. People have spread their cloaks on the road before Jesus. Others have spread leafy branches on the road.

There are people before him and people behind. And they're all shouting. They're all shouting at Jesus. And this is what they were shouting. Hosanna, praise. Hosanna, save.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest. Scenes of great triumph. Hosanna, praise.

As the crowds believed that in the person of Jesus Christ, The kingdom of God would finally be ushered in. And they were shouting, Hosanna and praise to God.

[7 : 46] But less than a week later, Crowds are shouting again. But this time it's not, Hosanna, praise. No. This time it's, crucify him. Crucify him.

Verse 10 of chapter 15. Pilate perceived that it was out of envy That the chief priest had delivered Jesus up. But the chief priest stubbed up the crowd To have them release for them Barabbas instead.

And Pilate said to them, Then what shall I do with the man you call the king of the Jews? And they cried out again, crucify him. And Pilate said, why? What evil has he done?

But they shouted all the more, crucify him. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, Released for them Barabbas. And having flogged Jesus, He delivered him to be crucified.

And so as we come to our verses this afternoon, It seems that the hopes of a people, The hopes of a nation, That Jesus was the one to usher in the kingdom of God, It seems that those hopes have been dealt a death blow, Along with Jesus.

[8 : 50] What seems so promising, Has ended in great tragedy. Now I suppose on one level, The cross is a great tragedy. The apostle Peter, When preaching in Acts chapter 3, Said, But you denied the holy and righteous one, And asked for a murder, A murderer to be granted to you, And you killed the offer of life.

So on one level, It is a great tragedy. But Mark, Mark the evangelist, Mark the preacher, Wants us to see that the message of the cross, Is not one of great tragedy, But one of great triumph. And I hope that as we go through these verses, We will see that this is Mark's interpretation, Of these events, Not mine. And that the message of the cross, That Mark intended to convey to us, Is a message of great triumph.

There are a lot of things going on in these verses, But three dramatic things in particular, That are happening, That will help us chart a course through these verses. There is the darkness, There is the darkness, Then secondly, There is the first cry of Jesus, And then thirdly, There is the second cry of Jesus, And the temple curtain being torn in top, In two from top to bottom.

Focusing on these particulars, Well in turn I hope, Make plain for us, The message of the cross, That Mark is keen for us to see, And keen for us to understand. The darkness, Well the darkness, Represents God's anger.

[10 : 19] The first cry of Jesus, Represents his abandonment. And the second cry of Jesus, And the curtain being torn in top, From top to bottom, Represents that we, Sinners like you and me, Can be accepted.

We can be accepted by God. Last week we considered verse 33, That God is angry, Represented by the darkness. And as we looked at these verses, We come to understand, That no Jew would be confused, As to what the darkness meant.

Especially darkness, In the middle of the day. It meant that God was present. Present in his anger, And present in his judgment. So in these three hours of, Untimely, Unforgettable, And eerie darkness, God's judgment, And God's anger, Are being poured out.

But where is God's anger? Where is God's judgment, Being poured out? Well as we consider, Our verses for today, Verse 34 to 36, Mark wants us to see, Yes God's anger is being poured out, But it is poured out upon Jesus.

Verse 34 to 36, Jesus has abandoned, The meaning of the first cry. Yes God is angry, But it is Jesus who is abandoned, As God's wrath is poured out upon him.

[11 : 37] That's what Mark wants us to understand, In these verses. In fact, That's what Jesus wants us to understand. That's why he cries out here, As he does, These agonizing, Awful words, Of Psalm 22, My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?

Well why did Jesus cry these words? Didn't Jesus know what was happening? Did the cross all come as a shock to Jesus? Well no, Not at all. All through Mark's gospel, Jesus had told his disciples, On more than one occasion, The fate that awaited him in Jerusalem, He told them back in Mark chapter 8, Verse 31, Chapter 9, Verse 9, Chapter 9, Verse 30, And most vividly, And descriptively, In chapter 10, Verse 32, And this is what he said, And they were on the road, Going up to Jerusalem, And Jesus was walking ahead of them, And they were amazed, And those who followed him were afraid, And taking the twelve again, Jesus began to tell them, What was going to happen to him, Saying, See, We are going up to Jerusalem, And the Son of Man will be delivered over, To the chief priests and the scribes, And they will condemn him to death, And deliver him over to the Gentiles,

The Romans, And they will mock him, And spit on him, And flog him, And kill him, But after three days, He will rise, You see friends, Jesus totally understood, What would happen in Jerusalem, He knew the fate that awaited him, Jesus expressed this, Horror of great darkness, This God forsakenness, By quoting the only verse of scripture, Which actually described it, And which he perfectly fulfilled, So he cries out these words of Psalm 22, So that we will understand, What is happening, Jesus quotes these words from Psalm 22, That were written, Some one thousand years earlier, And if you were to compare, Psalm 22 and Mark 15, You would see how very, Strikingly similar they are, In fact, Let me just read some, Some verses for you, Scorned by mankind, And despised by the people, All who see me mock me, They make mouths at me,

They wag their heads, He trusts in the Lord, Let him deliver him, Let him rescue him, For he delights in him, Be not far from me, For trouble is near, And there is none to help, Many bulls encompass, Encompass me, Strong bulls of Bashan surround me, They open wide their mouths at me, Like a ravening and roaring lion, I am poured out like water, And all my bones, Are out of joint, My heart is like wax, It is melted within my breast, My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue sticks to my jaws, You lay me in the dust of death, For dogs encompass me, A company of evildoers encircles me, They have pierced my hands, And my feet, I can count all my bones, They stare and gloat over me, They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing, They cast lots, You don't have to read very much of Psalm 22, Before you realize that Mark chapter 15, Is the actual fulfillment, Of Psalm 22, Psalm 22 describes, The Lord's anointed king, Who is being scorned, Mocked, And despised by all who see him, But worse than that, He feels he has been abandoned, By God himself, My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me, Why are you so far from saving me, From the words of my groaning, Oh my God, I cry by day, But you do not answer, And by night, But I find no rest, That's what Mark wants us to understand, Is happening on the cross, The darkness represents God the Father's anger, And the cry, The cry represents the Son of God's abandonment, As God's anger for sinners, [16:02] Is pulled out upon him, But why? Why would God's punishment for sin, Be pulled out in Jesus? Why is that happening, You may ask, Jesus didn't do anything, To deserve punishment from men, That was Pontius Pilate's conclusion, He perceived that it was out of envy, The chief priests had brought Jesus to him, His assessment was that, That Jesus was innocent of any crime, Saying in response to the crowd, Why?

What evil has he done? That's what shocked that Japanese lady, That I told you about earlier, As she read through Mark, How could Jesus be delivered up to die a criminal's death? He had not done anything wrong, And if man could find no fault in Jesus, Then neither could God, Remember back in Mark chapter 1, And the baptism of Jesus, As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, The heavens were torn open, The spirit descended on him like a dove, And God the Father's voice bellowed from heaven, You are my beloved son, With you I am well pleased, And again in the Mount of Transfiguration, Back in Mark chapter 9, Remember in verse 7, And a cloud overshadowed them, And a voice came out of the cloud, This is my beloved son, Listen to him, No friends, Jesus wasn't abandoned for his sin, For he had none, Remember the words of the hymn that we sang earlier, Yes finished, The Messiah dies, Cut off for sins, But not his own, Jesus was abandoned for the sins of others,

That's what Jesus understood, His death to be about, Remember the words he spoke back in Mark chapter 10, Verse 45, For even the Son of Man came not to be served, But to serve, And to give his life as a ransom for many, Jesus knew that his death, And the judgment and the anger of God, That he would face at his death, Was on the behalf of others, Yes finished, All the debt is paid, Justice divine is satisfied, The grand and full atonement made, God, For a guilty world, Has died, Jesus knew, That God's wrath and anger for sin, Would be, Pulled out on him, On the cross, That's the only thing, That makes sense of why Jesus was troubled so much, In the garden of Gethsemane, Not because of, Of what he knew, What he would experience at the hands of men, Of which there was much, But no, Because of what he knew he would experience, At the hands of God, At the hands of God, For the sin of others, For human sin, That's why Jesus prayed, That this cup, The cup of God's wrath, May be removed from him, He was asking, Is there no other way, No other way for sin to be paid for, No other way for human beings to be forgiven, And the answer was no, No other way for God's anger to be dealt with, The only way to deal with the anger of the Father, Was through the abandonment, And the anguish, Of the Son, The only way, For sinners like you, And like me, To receive acceptance from this holy God, Is through the abandonment of Jesus, That's the message of the cross, Christ became sin for us, Took the blame,

[19:46] Bore the wrath and the anger, So that we may stand forgiven, And accepted at the cross, In our final verses, 37 to 39, Mark shows us in a very vivid way, That the great abandonment of Jesus, Leads to the great achievement of Jesus, That sinners like you, And like me may be accepted, We will look at these verses next time, But it's just enough to say today, Jesus was abandoned on the cross, He faced the anger of the Father, So that sinners, Rebels like you and like me, Can be accepted, But friends, This isn't an automatic acceptance, You have to respond, You have to accept, That there is no other way, No other way for you to receive acceptance, By the Father, And through the agony of the Son, As the hymn writer puts it, Nothing in my hand I bring,

Simply to the cross,

I cling, Have you done this? Jesus has done all, That is necessary, For you to come, And be accepted by God, Today would be a good day to come, Don't you agree?

Let's pray together, When I realized, My own sinful condition, And that Jesus had paid the penalty, For my sin, I wanted somehow, Or another to respond, Maybe from your heart, This afternoon you want to cry out to God, Well if that's you, Maybe you can join me in this prayer, Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker, And more sinful, Than I ever before believed, But through you, I am more loved and accepted, Than I could ever dare hope, I thank you for paying my debt, For bearing my punishment, For being abandoned on the cross, And offering me forgiveness, I turn now from my sin, And receive you as my saviour, In Jesus name, Amen.