

My God My God Why have you Forsaken Me?

Psalm 22

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St. Stephen's, Wyandotte

*My God, My God why have you forsaken me?*

*Why are you so far from helping me?*

*O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;*

*And by night but find no rest. Psalm 22:1-2*

*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me...* Words Jesus uttered from the Cross. Words of absolute desperation, desolation, and despair. Where are you now God? God of all that is and all that shall be? Where do I find you?

Take a moment to think, to remember where you were, when it was that the Holy of Holies seemed gone. (pause x6)

Swiss Reformation Theologian John Calvin says that the opening words, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.*" is both a statement of extreme faith and despair all in one sentence, (Psalms: New Bible Commentary p64). The psalmist cries out with a sense of profound abandonment and even as the person laments, the author claims God as their own. "My God, My God."

These opening lines are for me the sum totality of our journey of faith. *You are my God*, I know this from countless times in my life, and yet in this moment, the world is upended, someone I love is gone, my cancer has returned, my child is at risk, my marriage is frail, the country is polarized, the world is fraught, our government is stalled, *You are my God and I feel forsaken, abandoned and alone.*

You are my God, and now WHERE ARE YOU?

The psalm continues on, laying out all the ways and that showcase God's absence. And as a result: "*My bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax...my mouth is dried up like a potshard, my tongue sticks to my jaws...My hands and feet have shriveled, I can count all of my bones.*" Psalm 22:14-16

But what the Psalmist doesn't do, that I sometimes find myself tempted to do, the Psalmist does not move away. The Psalmist doesn't end the relationship. The Psalmist doesn't stop their flow of pain and longing. The Psalmist doesn't decide that they are on their own.

Instead, the Psalmist's belief, their despair, their doubt is marked with a tenacious connection outward, beyond only themselves. So often when I am in despair, hurt, angry, or filled with doubt, I am tempted to just turn in on myself; forsaking the possibility of future care.

Yet the Psalmist's faithfulness is marked by their **tenacity**, not their **absence of doubt**. Doubt is alive and well, yet the relationship remains.

*Be not far away, O Lord;*

*You are my strength, hasten to help me*

*Save me from the sword,*

*My life from the power of the dog...*

*I will tell your name to my siblings,*

*In the midst of the congregation I will praise you. Psalm 22:22*

This then is what I need to remember, to mark and write upon my soul. Steadfastness, demanding, continuous asking and even accusations, position us, put me, put you, in a place to see and know God's saving help when it appears. We stay in relationship.

And then...

*The poor shall eat and be satisfied;*

*Those who seek the Lord shall praise the him*

*May your heart live for ever...*

*My soul shall live for God, my descendants shall serve him;*

*They shall be known as the Lord's forever.*

*They shall come and make known to a people not yet born*

*The saving deeds he has done.*

The author of Psalm 22 moves from desolation to persistent accusation and then consolation. Modeling a faith that is steadfast, not free from doubt or fear, but rather gracious tenaciousness that enables us even in wretched times to be not alone and to find solace with our God.

Amen.