

Fourth Word - What Is Sown in Your Heart?

Martha felt Jesus abandoned her when Lazarus was sick.

Can you understand what might have gone through her heart, her mind, and her soul if she heard the fourth word of Christ from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

While Martha may have felt forsaken at first, there is indeed always hope for a different ending in the story. She experienced that firsthand with Jesus and Lazarus when He called her brother out of the tomb, out from death and darkness. Perhaps what seemed imminent and final at the cross might have a twist in time as well. Regardless, at the moment Jesus uttered the fourth word, He was feeling forsaken.

The fourth word Jesus spoke from the cross has been hard to understand as words coming from the lips of the Son of God about His Heavenly Father. They sound heretical— sacrilege. He meant to say them, and He did not regret what He said.

Sometimes we regret what we say.

Matthew 12:34, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks."

As we consider the fourth word from the cross, listen to it and look at it through that lens: “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.” What we hear Jesus say during this moment are the thoughts and emotions coming from the depths of His heart and mind and soul as He is being flooded with everything that was in the cup of God’s wrath against sin.

Read Matthew 27:35-49

Isn’t it hard to hear Jesus say those words? Those words seem to go against the nature and character of who we understand God to be. Nobody really wants to think about God being a God who turns His back on someone.

Jesus is open and honest when He is in his deepest pain, “How’s everything going, Jesus?” He isn’t one who just goes, “Fine. Fine. Everything’s just fine.”

There is something refreshing and appealing in that Jesus is the God who gets raw, real and honest as He shares what’s in the depths of His soul. When the wrath of God began to flow from the cup into His life, what overflows out of the mouth of Jesus is what had been sown into the heart of Jesus for years and years and years.

Psalm 22 was sown into His soul from the early years of His life. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?”

Psalm 22 is known as a song of lament. It has at least two parts. The first part of the Psalm is about all the pain, suffering, and feelings of abandonment. However, halfway through the Psalm, it shifts from pain and suffering to hope and what’s coming around the corner: *The Kingdom of God and a new day when God will deliver His people and bring forth a victory worth celebrating throughout the ages.*

When a first century Jewish Rabbi’s quoted a line from a Psalm he would have the whole Psalm in mind. Thus, what may only look like Jesus crying out to His Father, He likely had a bigger picture in mind. He knew the whole psalm, and He was singing the entire song in His heart, coming from the depths of His soul.

Much of Psalm 22 came to life as Christ hung on the cross. Much of what we read in Matthew 27 is an echo of this psalm.

Psalm 22:7 and 8

*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!”*

When it says in verses 16-18...

For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and 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.”

Now look at how these last verses, 27-31, end with such hope, victory and perspective about what is coming at the end of the suffering. It has the rest of the story that Jesus, His contemporaries and all in that day who would have gone through tough, painful and suffering times would have been singing and holding on to what was sown into their hearts at young ages.

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

Jesus could do what He did for you and me, because he knew the ending of the Psalm 22. This psalm that was planted in His soul. This psalm that told Him why He was suffering and in pain and about to die. It was all because He loved us and wanted to FaceTime with us. He wanted a relationship with us.

Matthew wrote his gospel primarily with a Jewish audience in mind. And the things Matthew includes in his gospel account of the crucifixion would have connected on a cultural level with his first-century Jewish audience.

Why?

Because they had the Old Testament seeds sown into their souls as well. Thus, when the religious leaders of the day are standing around the cross watching this unfold and listening to what Jesus says, they see prophecy unfold right before their eyes.

But Psalm 22 wasn't the only dot the Jews connected with the Old Testament.

Matthew 27:45 says:

Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

The Jew counted time from the hour the sun came up until it went down. Thus, the sixth hour until the ninth hour would translate from noon to 3 pm. Therefore, just as the sky goes dark at about 3 pm, Jesus screams, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”, they would have looked around and not just seen the dark skies, they also would have seen other words of the prophets coming true.

In the Old Testament, when God brings darkness over the land, it is a sign of judgment. Because the Old Testament would have been sown into these Jewish hearts and minds, passages like Exodus 10 and Amos 8 would come to life. Exodus 10:21-22 says:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days.

Judgment is being personified by the darkness over the land. Notice similar language in Amos 8:9-10:

And on that day," declares the Lord GOD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.

Unless you knew the Old Testament as well as these people did, you would have missed the totality of what was happening that day. If Martha was there, she would not have missed it.

The fourth word from the cross is a magnificent word with a magnificent meaning for each of us. It is magnificent because we, too, are sowing things into the hearts of people all around us each day.

What are you sowing into the hearts of people around you?

There is never a greater time than today to begin sowing seeds of truth, love and God's word into the souls of your kids, your marriages, and your own lives. Jesus did that. And when His soul was flooded on the cross with the wrath of God, the song of Psalm 22 overflowed from Him. That overflow led to your life and my life being rescued from sin, death, Satan and hell. Those are words worth sharing and sowing into the heart and life of other people. Who will you share these words of hope with this week?