

Matthew 27: 45-50

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵ From noon until three in the afternoon **darkness came over all the land.** ⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon **Jesus cried out in a loud voice**, “Eli, Eli, ^[a] lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). ^[b]

⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Psalm 22:1-5

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

Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?

² **My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,**
by night, but I find no rest. ^[b]

³ **Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;**
you are the one Israel praises. ^[c]

⁴ In you our **ancestors put their trust;**
they trusted and you delivered them.

⁵ To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

One of the tensions around Christmas time for ministers and childrens workers all over is whether its ok to use *that* Carol. Beloved of Christingles in the dark and infant nativity services throughout the land. Yes its Away in a manger.

What, hang on, whats the issue here? Its lovely to hear little voices sing this and its one of the few carols these days that you can guarantee everybody knows.

But little do many people know the angst that it causes.

It was written, like once in Royal David’s City, as we shall find out in the carol service in a couple of weeks time, as a song to help children learn about the gospel, specifically the apostles creed. This is the song to help learn of jesus’ birth. And it is a sweet song that is easy to pick up and to remember.

*Away in a manger
No crib for His bed*

*The little Lord Jesus
Lay down His sweet head*

*The stars in the bright sky
Look down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay*

Not much to complain about so far. He is a baby. He had no crib. There were stars. There was probably hay. He undoubtedly slept. Whats the beef? Well its in the next verse...

*The cattle are lowing
The poor Baby wakes
But little Lord Jesus
No crying He makes*

It goes against every aspect of trinitarian theology and the soteriological apparatus by which we are saved. And other such high filutin theological words that people who know about these things love to say. He was a baby. He was human. He was a human baby. Born of the virgin Mary etc etc

OF COURSE HE CRIED!

We see Jesus cry out more than once in the gospels. The shortest verse in the bible of course is Jesus wept. But that was crying tears. This is raising his voice in anguish. We tend to think of Jesus' responses to be measured and calm, not given to raised voices and emotional responses. Rather killer responses to questions from the odd Pharisee designed to catch him out or maybe resigned pity at the disciple's inability to get it. A pastorally sensitive yet supremely authoritative voice. What would it take to get Jesus to raise his voice let alone cry out?

In the gospels we hear the impure spirits cry out in Jesus' presence, we hear mary magdelene cry out "Rabboni" when she recognises Jesus on Easter day, when he says her nam. John the Baptist cried out when giving testimony about the one who was to come after him. A cry out requires an exclamation mark.

Yet we only find Jesus crying out in two other places:

🔗 [John 7:28](#)

*Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, **cried** out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.”*

It is the feast of tabernacles and Jesus is in the temple courts engaging the crowd and the teachers of the law in teaching and debate. Jesus’ exclamation is in the face of the illogicality of their arguments about their following of the law while not recognising the one who came to glorify the Father; how dare he heal on the sabbath?! They say. Jesus’ opponents then effectively deny him because they know where he comes from. The messiah, we will not know where he comes from. Legend has it.

Jesus cries out his mission – sent by the Father; “you do not know him but I know him” he cries out. They just do not get it. This gets them really riled up. They try to seize him but many in the crowd believe in him.

Jesus spoke with passion. The time had come to be direct and many in the crowd needed to hear. “I am the one!” Those around him who denied who he was were just plain wrong!

📖 [John 12:44](#)

*Then Jesus **cried** out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.*

In another similar episode Jesus seeks to persuade the leaders, and many believe in him but others cannot bring themselves to acknowledge who he is because they are more concerned about what other people will say about them than giving their lives to the truth of the messiah.

Two occasions Jesus cried out. Twice he was talking to people who did not understand who he is.

On the cross he cried out. They still did not believe who he was. He was mocked, beaten, abused with wine vinegar on a dirty sponge. Finally, he was separated from the Father by the sins he bore. The wrath of God, due to humanity, taken upon himself. The one-time Jesus, who was innocent and perfectly obedient, was separated from God by the evil and the rebellion of humanity. Of you and me.

He cried out.

Why have you forsaken me?

Just as at his temptation in the desert, he quotes scripture. Psalm 22 to be precise. A psalm that acknowledges the Father on the throne, who is to be trusted and who saves. And yet here on the cross of shame Jesus cries out – why have you forsaken me? I know what you have done for Israel in the past. I came to be the new Israel. Where is my salvation. **Where is the salvation of all the people?**

The answer lies in the death that was just a few breaths away. The giving of Jesus' spirit, so that the wholly human, wholly God, divine being would die a human death that we might have life. Suffering and yet shouting out – do you not get it? I am the messiah. The anointed one to bring you redemption. This is the point of victory over death – I must die. That you will have life.

Of Psalm 22, David Kidler wrote this *“No Christian can read this without being vividly confronted with the crucifixion. It is not only a matter of prophecy minutely fulfilled, but of the sufferer's humility—there is no plea for vengeance—and his vision of a world-wide ingathering of the Gentiles. ‘The suffering servant wins the deliverance of the nations’.*¹

Both the psalm and the verses in Matthew 27 (and the other gospels in their own way) describe a moment which when depicted on film leads to warnings that “the following scenes may be distressing to some viewers”. It is a moment when Jesus cries out to a broken world that “I am the messiah, anointed to die, that you might live, and the cost?.....the cost is this...My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

So this Christmas, let us contemplate the babe in the swaddling cloths, away in a manger, as the one whose destiny was to cry out on a cross.

*I love Thee, Lord Jesus
Look down from the sky
And stay by my side
'Til morning is nigh*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus
I ask Thee to stay*

Close by me forever

And love me,

I pray