

# **Giving Voice to the Cry**

## **“His cry is our cry.”**

### **Matthew 27:32-48**

Rev. John H. Hice  
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First United Methodist Church of Royal Oak, Michigan

#### **Jesus' Cry**

Most years Lent happens and sometime during its course I hear the last words of Jesus. Scenes of Calvary come to mind: the arrest with disciples running away every-which-way, the mock trials and horrifying scourging, the long forced march from the City to the Hill of the Skull; then the nails and the thieves and the Suffering Servant. And it's there in the scene that the final words come to mind, perhaps especially, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me)?*

I hear the cry as one given by one who is completely abandoned. It's a solitary cry, Jesus' cry, alone.

And it is. No one is more alone than Jesus here.

#### **Our Cry**

Yet, in a deep sense, you and I cannot understand Jesus'; cry and what it means until we hear something familiar in it:

*My God, why have you forsaken me?* Does it have a familiar ring to it? Almost like you've heard it before? ...almost like you've said it or at least wanted to say it before?

And that's the point: whether it was supposed to be said, whether it was good or bad theology to be said, whether it was polite enough to be said to God or not. *It has been said* or at least felt many times life has been dealt an unfair blow. *God, why did you leave me here all alone?*

A 55 year old wonders it the day he finds out that the job he could always count on was gone, no more insurance, in the face of his wife's major illness.

Why have you forsaken me? A mother chokes down the words as the door slams and she knows her son's rage has a connection to drugs.

Domestic violence leaves its physical and emotional marks on one who sometimes wants to pray it.

On, I could go; this cry is finally yours and it's mine deep down. It simmers in the failures and injustices, the unresolved guilt and loss.

Unsaid: because you think it can't be said; it only grows stronger and works against you; undermines faith; builds a wall between you and the God you believed left you hanging.

### **Saying It for Us**

Now, Jesus is left hanging and alone. And this cry you and I have been too polite or afraid to say out loud is said. Jesus feels it and he owns it. He confesses it: not confession as admitting sin; but as one simply coming clean with what is. Never mind that the words are from a psalm that ends in a statement of hope. He says it to express the truth of real anguish.

Perhaps it is here, upon a cross in the midday heat as Jesus undergoes the cruelest, most punishing death a person can die, that he finally gives voice to your cry. Perhaps his cry gives voice to the truth of the things that keeps you apart from God and increasingly trapped in brokenness.

*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani:* can it be that this cry from the Cross finally signals the tearing down of some wall that separates you from God and finally frees you to confess your hurt or your sin and be rescued?

For, as long as you do not confess the pain of whatever it is, how then, by his stripes, can you be healed?

A friend of mine had already been given up for dying on several occasions. She'd had surgery after surgery and had surprised physicians by persevering through crisis after crisis. She had come to be known as some kind of heroine of the Faith. And then, she faced yet another surgery and she looked at me through exhausted eyes and finally, with a lot of pause, admitted, "I am so angry. I shouldn't say it, I know; but I am so angry with God. I know that it's wrong, but I can't get by it, and now I can't even pray."

We talked about that for a while, until we came to the conclusion that she had every right to see all this as unfair. Then, instead of pushing down the anger, why not tell the

anger to God? After all, I suggested, God has big enough shoulders to take it. As long as you can't pray because of the anger, let the anger become the prayer. Until then, the anger had been a wall between her and God. When later she confessed the anger, it became a bridge.

Then she found grace enough to live at the cross. She was finally given a voice in Jesus cry. There, as she said it, her abandonment was met by a God who would be crucified to save her from that which was overwhelming. And regardless the course of her physical health... she was healed.

When it comes down to the honest truth, you will never find your way around the wall of God's abandonment until you give voice to your own cry: confess it and find it rises in harmony with the cry from the cross.

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?  
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Then comes the part where you are given hope.