

**"Forsaken"**  
**Sermon for Sunday, June 10, 2018**

**SCRIPTURE:** Read with congregation responsively

**HYMN:** "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior" (v. 1, 3, 4)

**MORNING MESSAGE**

**We continue our journey as we wander in the Psalms**... the great hymn book of poetry in the Old Testament. It is an emotional journey as you make stops along the way—visiting joy... visiting grief... visiting faith and doubt... visiting words of praise and words of anger... words of prayer... all of these are the words of God's people, God's community of faith, through the centuries. With a light heart, it feels good to skip along as we experience the words of Psalm 100: "*Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the lands... come into the LORD's presence with singing!*" The psalmist reminds us that "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want".

**And then, as we encounter Psalm 22, we hear these despairing words:**

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me...*

Words attributed to King David, perhaps as his enemies sought to kill him.

Word from an unknown psalmist that express an anguish perhaps we have known. The good news is that we can be honest with God about our feelings.

In relationships that really matter, we should be honest about feelings.

It fact there is something cathartic and healing about letting it out and letting it go. We can be honest above all with God. Why this diagnosis? Why my marriage? Why this accident? Why my child? Why God?

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me...*

*A company of evildoers encircles me;*

*they have pierced my hands and feet.*

*They divide my garments among them, and for my raiment, they cast lots."*

And suddenly we are transported in time to the desperate cry of Jesus from the cross. "Eli, Eli lama sabachthani"—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." Jesus, the very incarnation of God, reached a point where even he cried out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" We are drawn into the realization that we have a Savior who knows our experiences of suffering.

**It was a beautiful September Sunday morning at the church—we were celebrating Holy Communion.** The congregation came forward to receive the elements including a family—mother, father, son who was starting his senior year in high school and a daughter beginning her freshman year... together, worshipping. They went home after church—Dad headed to his workshop with his tools and lathes, Mom and daughter headed out to do some shopping, the son headed to the empty basement of their home and hung himself.

His mother and I had many conversations—mostly she talked and I listened. She shared that she thought she had lost her faith. I asked: “What makes you think you have lost your faith?” “Because I don’t understand how God could have allowed this to happen!” “So you still believe in God, but the struggle is to understand all of this?” “Yes...” she replied.

**And we too, have known those moments in our own way... in a different way perhaps.** And yet, in the midst of despair and doubt, the words of the psalmist turn to hope: *“From you comes my praise in the great congregation... and those who seek the LORD shall praise the LORD!”*

Words of doubt turned to words of hope. In our Jesus, words of despair turned into resurrection. Despair and death could not defeat him... that cold tomb could not hold him and there would be new life. For him it came in three days. For us resurrection sometimes takes longer... My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

**It was through the suffering of Christ that we are redeemed, forgiven and brought back into relationship with God. Out of Christ’s suffering comes redemption.**

And our sufferings can be redemptive experiences because suffering changes us. A sense of redemption does not often come at first. It takes time... time for us to reflect... to perhaps begin some healing. But when we have gone through times of trial and suffering, we gain a new sense of compassion for others. “Com-passion” means “to suffer with”. With compassion, we are willing to be present--to sit and listen. With compassion, we know that presence is more important than words. With compassion, our acts let the other know that they are not alone. And therein lies some sense of goodness/redemption out of our own suffering. The Apostle Paul once said:

*“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Not suicide. Not despair. Not words of venting. Not doubt. Not anger. And therein lies hope... you are never forsaken by God!

**Riley’s baptism this morning was a time for us to welcome her into the community of faith, to recognize that God is at work in her life and to renew our commitments journey with her—to be there for her.**

We will love her enough to get to know her... to really get to know her. We will be there for her through thick and thin... in her times of joy and trial. We will remind her that nothing can separate her... or us... from the love of God.