4th Wednesday in Lent
Rolling Meadows - 1965

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 27: 45,46 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

THE WORD OF LONELINESS

The sacred narrative is not interested in giving us a running account of everything that took place at Calvary. The Scriptures were not written to satisfy our idle curiosity. They were written for faith - and they speak only to faith - for the building, and strengthening, and assurance of faith. Faith knows that there is an awful mystery here, because faith believes that here God has gone to the depths for man - here the Sinless One suffers for the sinful - here the Innocent One dies for the guilty - for on Him was laid the iniquity of us all. Faith perceives that here the wrath of God and the love of God, the justice of God and the mercy of God, are met together. Behold, ye ends of the earth, this is your God upon the Cross extended, and He looks more like the utter rejection of everything that you regard as good and sacred and even decent. Come and see, He cries in His anguish, was there ever sorrow like unto My sorrow? Here, behind the veil, there is the great atomic explosion within God Himself: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani -- My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Not even nature can bear to look. When God's Son goes to the Cross, nature cannot remain unmoved - and at high noon the sun is darkened for three hours. It was the kind of darkness which could be felt - the darkness of God's fury and judgment - as when 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 thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; they did not see one another, nor did any rise from his place for three days. So it is here. Darkness covers the earth at earth's brightest, and suddenly everything has become hushed and still. It is night while it is high day - and we cannot but be reminded of the end of all things, when the sun will lose its light and the moon and the stars will not be able to take its place. It is the time of God's judgment, and the whole world

is before the judgment seat of the Most High. Jesus has entered the Holy of Holies - the very presence of God - and He has gone in all alone where no eye can penetrate. He has gone in all alone except for our sins. He hangs there before God guilty with every guilt sinful man has ever heaped up before his Maker. And the sun hides its face - the morning stars quit singing together - the angels strain at the will of God in order to fly to their Lord's help - the birds stop their chirping - and cattle and the beasts upon a thousand hills retire before the hand of their Maker. There is one place where God is - on Calvary - and all the rest of the world must know what it is like to be without God. The real light of the world is being extinguished - why should man yet see?

There is nothing that pierces so deeply into the depths of a man's soul as the feeling of forsakenness. Man is made to be loved, and when love is withdrawn, the heart is broken. 4. Life is without meaning A spanking may hurt a child, but not nearly so much as the withdrawal of a parent's love. The great, yearning cry of teen-agers today is that no one cares. A noted New York psychiatrist states flatly that more women suffer from lack of love and loneliness than from any other cause. To be forsaken by men is terrible. To be forsaken by God is hell. King Saul of the Old Testament persisted in his disobedience until, as we are told, God forsook Saul. And what a miserable life he had from that day on! The rich man who rejected God by rejecting Lazarus at his gate was forsaken by God and cast out of His presence. And in hell he lifted up his voice and cried, I am tormented in this flame. This is the essence of hell - to be separated from God. & forsaken

This is the hell there on Calvary. Jesus is alone, far more alone than we can even begin to realize. Out of the darkness there comes only the agonizing cry: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? We may listen, but we do not hear aright unless we hear this as the cry of Him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, so that it was the chastisement of our peace that was upon Him in order that by His stripes we might be healed. This is the mystery that only faith can see

-- the mystery of God forsaken by God -- He who claimed absolute oneness with the Father. If you look at Him now, do you also see the Father? Is this the One who already was before Abraham? Is this the One who is the Resurrection and the Life, so that if a man lives and believes in Him he shall never die? Is this the Way, the Truth, and the Life - the only One by whom a man can come to the Father? My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? This much we must hear: God takes sin seriously - so seriously that He forsakes His own Son who was made to be sin for us.

What does it mean? It means that there is no possible condition of life - no sorrow - no shattering grief - no pain - no suffering - nothing whatever in which a man need ever be alone again. His cry is the sum total of all the cries that come through the clenched teeth of a hopeless and helpless humanity - the strange shrieks that come from the mentally ill - the heavy breathing of the dying who will not die - the loud groans of the dead who cannot die - the convulsive sobs of the widows and the orphans, and the whole company of the bereaved - the numbed response of our own aching hearts. Here is the One who came over to our side. He not only knows but He also bears. He looks with sorrowful eyes into the eyes of sorrow, and He winces with every new pain of the sufferer, and He takes into His great heart this mystery of misery which is our human life and which we shall never be able to understand.

Jesus Christ is no make-believe, play-acting Savior. He went all the way down into the deepest depths of our tragedies - into the bottomless pit where life itself becomes meaningless. He too must cry out His Why? He too must know what it means to be left alone, all alone, so alone that you cannot see or count on God's hand. As a result, this can never again be our cry - for in this darkness we now have a Companion, a Friend who is closer than a brother. Jesus has tied Himself to me. Here is His hell that He might cry my cry to God - that I might never cry it again, because He is with me forever, even unto the end of the world. Now there is always a hand that I can grasp - even when it is so dark that

I cannot see it - and I know whose it is and why it is there because by faith I can still feel the print of the nail. Now there is always One to whom I can turn because He is always there and He is there for me - even when I shall walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

When Jesus cries out His Why of God-forsakenness, He shows us the way - the only way by which we can be kept from despair. He turned to God, and He refused to let go: My God, My God. Even when the hell about Him insisted that God had nothing to do with Him any more and the devil at His side kept whispering to come down from the Cross in order that He might again be with God - even then Jsus turned to God Himself - to the God who could not possibly forsake Him, though everything said that He did. This is basic to our faith: Jesus still holds to God when there is no reason why He should, and Jesus cries to God when the heavens are so dark that He cannot see God or any trace of Him. He cries directly to God. God is there - He is always there - and because of Jesus He is there now also for us. This is what only faith can see. And this is what faith hears when it listens in the dark and knows what is involved when the only Son of God cries out: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Amen.