



## ***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address** : Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

**Mailing Address** : 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701  
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**Website** : [www.sp-ecc.org](http://www.sp-ecc.org)

June 21, 2009

**Theme: How Deep the Father's Love for Us**

**Text: Matthew 27:25-46**

In our passage today, we will reflect upon the death of Jesus. We noted last week that the Gospel writers do not focus much upon the gory details of Jesus' scourging and crucifixion. Instead they focus upon His humiliation and death. The focus upon the theological meaning of Jesus' crucifixion and death. This becomes especially true as Matthew records what theologians call, "the cry of dereliction." What they mean by that is Jesus' cry just before he died, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" What does this saying mean? Did God abandon Jesus at the point of his death. We will examine that question as well as other elements of Jesus death. The fact that Matthew devotes 11 verses to it tells us that this is an important subject for his readers.

The first thing that Matthew tells us is that the sun was darkened from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. This would be from about Noon to 3:00 PM according to our reckoning of time. Commentators and theologians have found a number of meanings in this darkness that occurred in the middle of the day. First it would have been interpreted by believing Jews as a sign that God was angry. He was angry with those who had tortured and crucified his Son. Second, God was telling the world of his wrath against sin and that he was pouring out that wrath upon his Son. Third, the darkness was a sign of Gods mourning over the death of His Beloved Son. God is telling the world that it should sit up and take notice of what was happening now. This was not just the crucifixion of an ordinary man. This was the crucifixion of the Son of God.

Then at the ninth hour, something even more earth-shattering occurs. Jesus cries out, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken Me?" At 3:00 PM on the Day of the Passover, the high priest was sacrificing Passover lamb for the whole nation of Israel. It is at that time that Jesus dies. Matthew clearly intends to tell us that Jesus was the true Passover Lamb. In the Exodus, God delivered his people from the bondage of slavery. Through Jesus death on the cross, God liberates people from the slavery to sin. Matthew's passion narrative began with Jesus' prayer that God's cup of wrath would not be poured out upon Him. Matthew's passion story also ends with a prayer as Jesus cry of anguish is a quote of Psalm 22:1. These words were so important that Matthew wrote them down in Jesus' native language which was Aramaic.

First we notice that Jesus cries out, "My" God. Even in the time of his greatest separation from God, God is not someone who is alien to Jesus. He still cries out to him, My God. Jesus kept faith even when His Father turned His face away from him. Jesus believed that the abandonment would not be permanent. Jesus cries out to the God whose presence he does not feel. He prays to the God whom he does not experience. In this moment, Jesus



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teaches us about the deepest kind of faith. The deepest level of faith means believing and trusting in God even when we do not feel his presence. Jesus keeps the faith even in his abandonment. Jesus teaches us most clearly about true faith right here when he is abandoned by God. His words tell us that Jesus "...took our abandonment, our questions, our feelings of God's betrayal, our most agonizing experiences and still believed in the God whose presence he did not feel, and was tempted to disbelieve."

Jesus asks "Why...?" "Why?" Is the question that we ask when we suffer. We are taught to believe in God's protection and care—and rightly so. Our belief in God's protection is what make suffering seem so alien to our experience. Jesus of all people had the right to ask the "Why?" question of God. He had been obedient to God at every point of his life even to this final moment. In His humanity He identifies himself with us. Jesus knew full well why God was abandoning Him at this moment. But He is a human being who feels real pain. In fact, this was the element of His suffering that Jesus dreaded the most—that moment when God would turn His face away from His only begotten Son. Paul interprets the meaning of Jesus death in many ways. One of those ways is stated like this, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." On the cross, Jesus absorbed all of our sin and guilt and so God turned His face away from His beloved Son.

In the end though, Jesus words must remain somewhat of a mystery to us. On the one hand they are so important that Matthew and Mark give them to us in Jesus' own language. On the other hand, neither Matthew nor Mark gives us an interpretation of what they mean. Jesus cries out because he is experiencing separation from His Father for the first time since eternity past. Because the Son of God had taken the sins of the world upon himself, God the Father turned His back on Him. At the same time we must say that Jesus did not in any sense or degree cease to be Equal with God as a member of the Trinity. The mystery of Jesus separation from God is too deep for even the most mature believe to comprehend. Yet, we acknowledge that he was separated from God in his humanity. This was the most dreadful part of his suffering on the cross—not the physical pain. Even though we cannot fully understand it, we can be grateful for it. Jesus experienced separation from God so that we would never have to experience separation from God.