

We've been working our way through Mark's Gospel on and off over the past few months. Last week we saw Jesus challenging the Pharisees and the religious leaders about their evil hearts.

Well, as we follow the story through the Jewish elders and teachers of the law get their way.

In Mark chapter 14 the chief priests and the elders and teachers of the law come together and condemn Jesus as worthy of death.

in chapter 15 they turn Jesus over to pilot and pilot hands Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified.

And after the soldiers had their fun with him they lead Jesus out to be crucified which brings us to today's passage.

The last six hours of Jesus life.

mark 15:25

"25 It was the third hour when they crucified him." Mark 15:25, NIV.

"26 The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS." Mark 15:26, NIV.

Their day began at 6 AM.

so the third hour is nine o'clock in the morning...

that time is important

we'll find out why when we get to midday...

Once the actual crucifixion of Jesus starts, the first people mentioned by Mark are the soldiers in verse 24.

“24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.” Mark 15:24, NIV.

that's Very significant because it's the first of a series of incidents that are fulfilling a psalm that was written 1000 years earlier....

in a moment Jesus will quote Psalm 22,
Psalm 22 is a psalm about God's King being crucified
Ps 22:16 says

“16 ...a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.” Psalms 22:16, NIV.

as Jesus is crucified, Psalm 22 is fulfilled
it's as if it has all been scripted 1000 years earlier...

These soldiers,
unintentionally, are fulfilling verse 18 of Psalm 22.

“18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.”
Psalms 22:18, NIV.

Next we are introduced to 3 groups of people, there's two criminals crucified next to Jesus, there's the crowds passing by, and there is the chief priests and teachers of the law.

But they all have the same response... see if you can spot what is similar about their response,

Firstly the crowds... Verse 29

“29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 come down from the cross and save yourself!”” Mark 15:29, 30, NIV.

secondly the religious people v31

“31 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself!” Mark 15:31, NIV. “32 Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.”

thirdly the people crucified with Jesus
the rest of v32.

Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.” Mark 15:32, NIV.

The point is everyone is mocking him and hurling insults at him..

Psalm 22, verse seven..

“7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:” Psalms 22:7, NIV.

And even the content of their mocking is the same...

Listen to Psalm 22. Verse eight.

“8 “He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.”” Psalms 22:8, NIV.

Mark 15:31 they taunt Jesus with....

“He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself!”

there is an irony in their words though...

because they are meaning to mock Jesus with those words but the words they are using are actually true, but in a far greater sense than they mean them to be!!!...

He saved others, but he can't save himself.

Well.... Jesus could have saved himself, come down from the cross...
but if he saved himself, he couldn't save others.

Jesus is choosing to not save himself,
so that he can save others.

because to save others he needed to die...
which is what he does...

“34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” --which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” 36 One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. 37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.” Mark 15:34-37, NIV.

In his cry of “ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” Jesus is quoting from Psalm 22.

The Psalm has already been fulfilled by the soldiers as they cast dice, and pierced his hands and feet.
it’s been fulfilled by the crowds and the chief priests and they hurled insults and shook their heads...

But now the darkest part of Psalm 22 is fulfilled...v1

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?

Forsaken is a very strong word, but also it's used strangely in this particular Psalm..

Every other time the word 'forsaken' comes up in the Psalms... every other time... it says that God will not forsake his people.

here's just a few of them...

Psalm nine

you Lord have never forsaken those who seek you.

Psalm 37:25 I was young and now I am old yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken.

Psalm 37:28 the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones.

Psalm 94 verse 14 the Lord will not reject his people, he will never forsake them.

Then along comes Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Psalms 22:1, NIV.

How can God forsake his anointed one? He promises never to forsake those who seek him...

Psalm 22 can only be understood when we see that it is talking not about David, but about Jesus as he takes the sin and filth of his people upon himself.

what David could only dream about experiencing, Jesus really experienced.

The people around Jesus totally misunderstand what he's saying..though.... verse 35.

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They mis-hear the eloi, eloi,
and they think Jesus is crying out For the prophet Elijah
to come and rescue him,
so they give him a bit of vinegar on a stick in the hope
that perhaps they can keep Jesus alive until Elijah comes
along.

because the old Testament,
God promised that before the great day of his judgement,
he would send the prophet Elijah to prepare the way...

these people are waiting for this elijah like character to
come..

The problem is Elijah has already come...

back in mark 1....

it was John the Baptist.

And they killed him.

Elijah has prepared the way...

the way of suffering and death....

and Jesus is about to follow.

There's one more character in this scene though.
Perhaps the central character.
And I'm not talking about the centurion in v39...

I'm talking about God the Father.

God who had this event planned from before the world began.

God who from the moment Adam sinned, promised that he would rescue the world.

God the Father is right here overlooking these events.

we see it in verse 33..

“33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.”
Mark 15:33, NIV.

the 6th hour... that's midday, and the sun goes black.

What's going on there??

Well lets go back to the old testament, not to Psalm 22 this time but to the prophet Amos, about 700 years before Jesus, Amos chapter 8v9
Where it says....

in that day declares the sovereign Lord I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the Earth in broad daylight... I will make that time like morning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day.

and so at noon,

as jesus dies....

the sky goes black...

God, from heaven, is mourning the death of his only Son...

Yesterday we had the Easter hat parade at Madeline's school and it was one of those crazy times where you get a room full of 400 parents, watching the most uncoordinated and unprofessional performance that you've seen...

as 60 kids are up the front jumping up and down and dancing with their hats on.

This but if you watch the audience they're not looking at the 60 people dancing,

they're jigglng in their seats,
sticking their head around the side,
because they're looking at one person.

Their son,
their daughter.

And the children performing are not looking at an audience of 400,
they are looking for their mum ,or their dad.

So there I was in a crowd of 400 and madeline is down the other end of the hall...

and there she is, looking out for me...

and there I am, proud as a dad could be...

watching her dance!!!

and is one of those father - daughter moments.

There are moments like that in the gospel of Mark.

At Jesus baptism,
when the son begins his ministry,
the father was there watching...
and the voice came from heaven....

“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” Mark 1:11, NIV.

when Jesus finished his teaching ministry and started
heading towards the cross, at the Transfiguration,
God the Father was right there watching...
and he said “this is my son who I love, listen to him.”

And now in Mark 15, as Jesus bears the sin of the world....
God is once again looking down on his son,
is it in love, or is it in anger???
as Jesus bears the sin of the world?

and when the sky turns dark,
it is God's heart breaking...
as he mourns for his only son.

“I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.
I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter
day.

There is no word of love from the father this time....
just darkness...
and Jesus cries...

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

That's not the only action of God though.
Verse 37.

“37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.
38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” Mark 15:37,
38, NIV.

the curtain in the temple separated people from God's presence.
In the old Testament only the priest could enter through the curtain to the Most Holy Place where God was... and only once a year, and only after a sacrifice was made.

God rips that temple curtain in two from top to bottom. to show there are no more sacrifices needed.

Jesus sacrifice has opened up the way for people to come to God.

The Pharisees and teachers of the Law can't keep people away from God any longer.

And this is not just for Jews,
all people can now come to God.

And so isn't it fitting that the first one who realises what's going on is a Gentile.
a Roman centurion Verse 39.

“39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”” Mark 15:39, NIV.

He got it right.
This was the son of God.
The perfect son of the Father,
giving his life,
to rescue us....

Now the daylight flees, now the ground beneath
Quakes as its maker bows his head
Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life
'Finished!' the vict'ry cry.

This the pow'r of the cross
Son of God slain for us
What a life, what a cost
We stand forgiven at the cross