

“Where Did God Go?”

Psalm 22: 1-2

Job 3: 1-11

The Cry of Job (song written by Rev. Brian Heron)

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June 6, 2010

“*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” Those are the words of the Psalmist. They are the words of Jesus as recorded in both Matthew and Mark. And it would not be a stretch to say that they might have been the words of a man named Job who, as the Bible records it, “was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.” It appears that Job got in the middle of a heavenly spat between God and Satan. The unfortunate fallout was that Job had all of his thousands of livestock stolen, all of his servants and hired hands killed, and all of his children ten children killed in a freak tornado. “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” had to have been on the tongue of this poor man named Job.

One of the things that I love about the Psalms is that they aren’t intended to be good theology. The Psalms are really our songs and our poems to God. They aren’t so much about how God works or who God is, but about how we feel about God and life and the world. The psalms are our way of telling God what is one our heart. That is why, in the Psalms you will hear the full range of human emotion expressed—sometimes the complete elation of seeing God’s presence, sometimes the pleading for victory against enemies, sometimes deep gratitude for life, and sometimes, as in Psalm 22, the anguished voice of a person in complete and utter despair.

For the next six weeks we are going to try an experiment called “Dialogue Sermons.” The purpose of the dialogue sermon is threefold. One, it gives you a chance to share your own perspectives on scripture and the issues it raises. Secondly, I like to think of dialogue sermons as that place where the Bible greets life. It’s where these words that were written two and three thousand years ago actually take on a life of their own today. Lastly, as the sign out front says, “*This is a limited time offer to talk back to me.*” Who knows you may never get another chance like this again.

Today’s dialogue sermon focuses on one of the rawest and most difficult experiences of life: despair. The song I sang earlier was my moment of despair two years ago after having a series of losses in my life.

Questions for Reflection and Dialogue

How many of you at one time in your life or another have felt despair?

How did it feel?

Describe it for us?

In those moments have any of you ever felt like God had abandoned you?

Have you ever wondered like Job, if you did everything right, what you did to deserve this?

Are you surprised that Jesus said from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

What do you make of that?

As we close I’d like us all to turn to page 501 in your pew Bibles. Isn’t it interesting that the Psalm that is probably most difficult to hear is followed by the Psalm that is many people’s

favorite. Psalm 22 is a psalm of despair and it is followed by Psalm 23, a psalm of comfort. Isn't that just how it should be? Join me as we recite Psalm 23 together.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

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