

East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide: Forsaken No More

Guest Speaker: Pastor Keith Jenkins

Date: March 29th, 2024

Introduction:

On Good Friday, Pastor Keith Jenkins led the congregation in a time of reflection and contemplation on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. He emphasized the importance of pausing to remember and give thanks for the ultimate sacrifice that purchased our salvation. Pastor Keith focused on Jesus' cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46), exploring the profound implications of Jesus being forsaken by the Father so that we might never be forsaken again.

The Pain of Abandonment:

Pastor Keith began by discussing the deep pain of abandonment and the human longing to belong. He noted that we often seek acceptance and affirmation from others, even contorting ourselves to fit in, but ultimately find ourselves disappointed and hurt when people inevitably fail us. Jesus experienced this abandonment from his closest friends and disciples, who fled and denied him in his darkest hour.

Discussion Questions:

1. Share about a time when you felt abandoned or betrayed by someone close to you. How did that experience impact your view of relationships and your ability to trust others?
2. Why do you think we often seek acceptance and belonging from people, even when we know they may disappoint us? What does this reveal about our deeper needs?
3. How can the reality of Jesus' abandonment comfort us in our own experiences of rejection or loneliness?

Supporting Verses:

Matthew 26:56b - "Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** The disciples, who had spent years living and ministering with Jesus, abandoned him in his greatest hour of need.
- **Theological Significance:** This verse highlights the frailty of human loyalty and the depth of Jesus' suffering, as he faced the cross alone, forsaken even by his closest friends.
- **Application:** When we face abandonment or betrayal, we can find comfort in knowing that Jesus understands our pain, having experienced the ultimate desertion on the cross.

Matthew 26:34-35 - "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Peter, the disciple known for his bold faith and loyalty, adamantly declared his devotion to Jesus, only to deny him three times hours later.
 - **Theological Significance:** This exchange reveals the weakness of human resolve and the need for divine grace and strength to remain faithful in the face of fear and pressure.
 - **Application:** Like Peter, we may have the best intentions to follow Jesus faithfully, but we must recognize our own frailty and dependence on God's grace to sustain us.
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Forsaken for Us:

Pastor Keith then turned to the heart of his message, exploring the profound significance of Jesus' cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He explained that in this moment, Jesus took on the full weight of sin and experienced the abandonment of the Father so that we might never be forsaken. Because of the cross, we can have confidence that God will never leave us or turn his back on us, no matter what we face.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was it necessary for Jesus to be forsaken by the Father on the cross? What did this abandonment accomplish for us?
2. How does the reality that Jesus was forsaken for you personally impact your view of God's love and commitment to you?
3. In what areas of your life do you need to embrace the truth that you are never forsaken by God? How can this truth bring comfort and strength in the midst of difficult circumstances?

Supporting Verses:

Isaiah 53:4-5 - "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** This prophetic passage, written centuries before Christ, vividly describes the suffering and abandonment Jesus would endure on the cross.
- **Theological Significance:** These verses reveal the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death, as he took upon himself the punishment and abandonment we deserved, securing our peace and healing.
- **Application:** When we feel overwhelmed by our sin or the weight of suffering, we can find hope in the truth that Jesus bore it all for us, taking our place and purchasing our healing through his wounds.

Matthew 27:45-46 - "From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Jesus' cry from the cross, quoting Psalm 22:1, marked the climax of his suffering and the moment of his abandonment by the Father.
 - **Theological Significance:** In this moment, Jesus took on the full weight of sin and experienced the separation from God that we deserved, becoming the ultimate sacrifice for our redemption.
 - **Application:** Because Jesus was forsaken for us, we can have confidence that we are never alone and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:38-39).
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Conclusion/Reflection:

Pastor Keith's Good Friday message invites us to pause and reflect on the profound significance of Jesus' suffering and abandonment on the cross. As we contemplate the depth of his love and the price he paid for our salvation, we are reminded that we are never forsaken by God, no matter what we face. Because Jesus was forsaken for us, we can find comfort, strength, and belonging in our relationship with the Father, trusting in his unfailing love and commitment to us.

Reflection Questions:

1. Take a moment to reflect on the specific ways Jesus' abandonment on the cross speaks to your own experiences of rejection, loneliness, or fear. How does his sacrifice bring comfort and hope in these areas?
 2. In what practical ways can you daily embrace the truth that you are never forsaken by God? How might this truth change the way you approach challenges or difficult relationships?
 3. As you contemplate Jesus' suffering and death on this Good Friday, what specific aspect of his sacrifice stands out to you the most? Take time to thank him for his incredible love and the price he paid for your salvation.
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Prayer Requests:

[Share any personal prayer requests, and pray over the week ahead]

References:

Primary Sources:

- "Forsaken No More" Good Friday Service, East Hill Church, 04/07/2024. Delivered by Pastor Keith Jenkins.
- Sermon Discussion Guide, Provided by Kelly Paxton, and East Hill Church.
- The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV). Biblica, Inc.™, 2011.

Secondary Sources:

- Contextual and Theological Insights: Derived from general biblical scholarship and commentaries relevant to the verses from Matthew 26-27 and Isaiah 53.

General Sources on Biblical Studies:

- Stott, John. "The Cross of Christ." InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Keller, Timothy. "Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God." Penguin Books, 2013.
- Carson, D. A. "Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus." Crossway, 2010.

Collaborative Contributions:

- LLM Contributions: Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided sermon transcript and biblical verses.

LLM Training Data:

- LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to September 2023.